Monday, April 27, 2026 No 116 ₹7

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DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

# Sudharsan, Rabada fashion GT win

Gill's men post 8-wicket win to jump to fifth place

*Page 14*

# Modi, Shah seek to calm Matua anger

*Page 5*

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By Columbia Pacific

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HERITAGE CENSUS

# Karnataka maps 50,000 antiquities in a survey after 100 years

A view of Hampi's ruins. Also referred to as the Group of Monuments at Hampi, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Karnataka. FILE PHOTO

## Archaeology Dept races to complete taluk-wise field study in May

**AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR**
BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka is conducting its first antiquities survey in a century, with the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage covering 191 taluks and documenting over 50,000 antiquities so far.

The survey, expected to be completed in May, covers inscriptions, antiquities, monuments, places of worship, forts, and other structures of historical significance.

Each structure is assessed on 21 parameters, including its age, geographical coordinates, current condition, and historical significance. Surveyors also record conservation requirements and photographs. Details on how to reach each site by public transport, including the nearest bus stop and railway station, are part of the report.

The department expects to catalogue over one lakh antiquities across the state on completion. The findings will support conservation, monument protection, and action against encroachments.

Devaraj A, Commissioner of the Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage, told *DH*, "We have taken up the survey taluk-wise. This field survey will create a solid and genuine database for us to work on. Based on this, conservation and developmental projects can take place."

The department is using an app developed by the Karnataka State Remote Sensing Application Centre to build the database. Once complete, it will be made available on the department's website.

The survey is being conducted with the help of research assistants and conservation experts.

Historian Udaya Kumar PL said, "The move is very much welcome. We are happy this is being done, as it had to be done at least 30 years prior. In the last 30 years, at least 30 per cent of the antiquities have been lost, displaced or encroached upon because of rapid urbanisation. When we visit some of the sites, people have told us they destroyed inscriptions or hero stones to build their homes."

### Survey snapshot

- Covers inscriptions, antiquities, monuments, places of worship, forts, and other historically significant structures.
- Expected to be completed in May.
- Each site assessed on 21 parameters, including age, geographical coordinates, current condition, and historical significance.
- Surveyors document conservation needs and capture photographs of each site.
- Report includes access details, such as nearest bus stops and railway stations.
- Over one lakh antiquities expected to be catalogued across the state.
- Findings to aid conservation efforts, monument protection, and action against encroachments.

## Six arrested for dacoity, assault over college row

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Six people were arrested in south Bengaluru in a dacoity and assault case that allegedly stemmed from a dispute among students from different states, police said on Sunday.

A Kerala student studying in the Konanakunte area told police that six men barged into his rented accommodation on April 18, assaulted him and his roommates with fists and a knife, and robbed them of Rs 10,000 in cash, four mobile phones, two laptops, and his two-wheeler.

Konanakunte police registered a case and arrested the six suspects, Abhinesh, Kalai Vendhan, Vimal Raj, Kumaran, Prem Kumar, and Naveen Kumar, from Coimbatore on the night of April 21. The suspects are aged between 20 and 24.

Except for Abhinesh, all the others had completed their education and were employed.

None had prior criminal records.

Police recovered two laptops, four mobile phones, the stolen two-wheeler, and another two-wheeler used in the offence.

The recovered goods were valued at Rs 3 lakh.

A preliminary probe revealed that Abhinesh, a diploma student from Tamil Nadu and the prime suspect, allegedly brought the others from his home state to target the victims.

A court has remanded all six to judicial custody.

# State plans palliative care for all, extends focus beyond cities

## Expert committee formed to roll out Kerala-style model

**AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR**
BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka will soon have a structured palliative care framework available across the state, moving beyond the urban centres where such services are currently concentrated.

The state government has constituted a committee of palliative medicine experts to design and roll out the framework.

The 2026-2027 budget announced that the Kerala model would be replicated.

"The Kerala model focuses on providing palliative care to every corner of the community and is not limited to bigger cities of the state. Every human being deserves to live and die with dignity. They should not be left alone to suffer. Hence, palliative care is important," said Dr Yadhuraj Gowda, Professor and Head of the Department of Palliative Medicine, Bengaluru's Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology. Dr Gowda is a member of the committee.

"One of the major aspects of palliative care is pain management. A normal physician cannot treat the pain of a patient who is under palliative care as Essential Narcotic Drugs such as morphine must be used. But these can only be prescribed by doctors trained in palliative medicine," he added.

Kidwai currently provides palliative care for cancer patients under treatment, but not at the doorstep.

Dr Rajani Surendra Bhat, Interventional Pulmonologist and Palliative Care Physician, said, "Palliative care is physical, psychological, spiritual and social. Beyond pain and cancer, the government is planning a multidisciplinary committee, including paediatricians, to help children and parents understand the situation better. There is a lack of access to palliative medicine specialists, which needs to be addressed in primary care."

Cancer, neurological diseases such as Parkinson's, neuromotor disease, and all other life-limiting illnesses that worsen despite treatment come under palliative medicine, Dr Bhat said.

### Holistic care needed for children: Expert

Dr Anuradha Ganigara, Associate Professor, Department of Anaesthesiology and Paediatric Palliative Medicine, Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, said, "Children with cerebral palsy, metabolic disorders, and cancer have needs beyond pain that are currently not addressed. Pain is not rightly addressed in children. We also focus on symptom management."

"Communication is an important part of palliative care. We address the patient's view and are trained to communicate in an age-appropriate manner with children and patients, especially when delivering bad news," added Dr Anuradha, also a member of the committee.

The services will be available to both mentally and physically ill patients, officials in the department said.

> "Palliative care is physical, psychological, spiritual and social. Beyond pain and cancer, the government is planning a multidisciplinary committee, including paediatricians, to help children and parents understand the situation better. There is a lack of access to palliative medicine specialists, which needs to be addressed in primary care.
>
> **DR RAJANI SURENDRA BHAT**
> Interventional Pulmonologist and Palliative Care Physician

The delegation inspected key flyover corridors across Hyderabad, including this stretch. Hyderabad has over 30 major flyovers, grade separators, and elevated structures. PHOTO: GBA

## Bengaluru officials study Hyderabad flyover model

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** A team of engineers from Bengaluru's civic agencies recently visited Hyderabad to study the Telangana capital's network of flyovers, elevated corridors, and junction improvement projects, as the Karnataka government moves ahead with a slew of similar proposals for the IT city.

The delegation inspected key stretches across Hyderabad.

The visit comes days after the state cabinet approved a network of 11 flyovers at a projected cost of Rs 13,262 crore.

The proposed network spans multiple stretches, including Tumakuru Road, Mysuru Road, Hosur Road, Old Madras Road, and Kanakapura Road, among others. Officials said traffic across nearly 100 junctions is expected to be made signal-free.

According to publicly available data, Hyderabad has over 30 major flyovers, grade separators, and elevated structures.

Key projects include the Biodiversity Junction flyover, Durgam Cheruvu cable bridge, Punjagutta steel flyover, and Shaikpet flyover.

Officials said many of these projects have been built over the past five to six years.

## 27 engineers shifted out, many resist move from B'luru

BENGALURU, DHNS

Noting that 40% of posts in urban local bodies across the state are vacant, the Urban Development Department (UDD) has issued transfer and posting orders for 27 assistant executive engineers from the civil and environment cadres.

Engineers working in the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) and Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Ltd (BSWML) are learnt to be resisting the transfers and trying to stay in their existing positions.

The order cites National Green Tribunal (NGT) guidelines making it mandatory for municipalities to fill vacant environmental engineering posts without delay. The department notes that the vacancies have hampered the ability of urban local bodies to carry out sanitation, cleanliness, and environmental compliance tasks.

Among those on the transfer list are Santhosh Kumar Kaddi, Chitra J, Venkatesh R, JK Ravikumar, Thirthaprasad L, Shilpa Shree, Poornima GB, and Mamatha MS. They have been posted to Kalaburagi, Kolar, Koppal, Tumakuru, Yadgir, and Udupi, among other places.

They are said to be lobbying to retain their posts, with recommendation letters from Bengaluru ministers and MLAs.

### In brief

- 40% posts vacant in urban local bodies.
- Transfers driven by National Green Tribunal (NGT) mandate on environmental staffing.
- Staff shortage hits sanitation and compliance work.
- Postings to Kalaburagi, Kolar, Koppal, Tumakuru, Yadgir, Udupi.

### 'Transfer extortion'

Former BJP councillor NR Ramesh alleged that the order was being used as a "weapon to extract money" from engineers who want to stay back.

"Some engineers have been working in the erstwhile BBMP and now GBA for the last seven years although their parent organisation is some other. This is against the law," he alleged.

SUMMER SURVIVAL

A differently abled woman travels with her child in a three-wheeler in Jayanagar, holding an umbrella to shield them from the scorching sun. DH PHOTO/PRASHANTH HG

## India lacks standards to test microplastics, says CPCB

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** India does not have standards for specification, sampling, or testing of microplastics in drinking or river water, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has said.

The CPCB said its laboratory currently lacks the analytical and infrastructural capacity to test microplastics in water samples, and had explored outsourcing the work to specialised agencies.

However, in the absence of standardised sampling and analysis methods, results generated using existing research methodologies may not be reliable for regulatory or legal purposes, it noted.

Earlier this month, the CPCB wrote to the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) seeking standards for microplastics in river and drinking water, along with protocols for sampling and analysis.

In response, BIS said no such Indian standards currently exist, but added that it is considering developing standards for microplastics in drinking water and wastewater, with two standards — on sampling and analysis — under review.

Meanwhile, BIS said it has sought nationwide datasets from the past five years to support a revision of drinking water specifications (IS 10500: 2012), including data on contaminants such as microbiological and chemical parameters, pesticides, heavy metals, radioactive substances, and emerging pollutants like PFAS and microplastics.

The Central Ground Water Board said it does not have data on microplastics testing, and is awaiting inputs from the Ministry of Jal Shakti and other agencies.

**CPCB sought microplastics testing norms from BIS; none exist yet, but standards are under consideration.**

## Woman, 65, and man, 20, die in separate road accidents

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** A 65-year-old woman and a 20-year-old man died in separate road accidents on Saturday, police said.

The elderly woman, Kanya Prakash, an Abbigere resident, died after a speeding car hit her while she was standing at a road crossing in Chikkabanavara, where she had gone to visit a relative. She died on the way to the hospital.

Police have detained the driver and registered a case.

In the second incident, 20-year-old Raichur native Sandeep, who lived in Rajagopalnagar and worked at an iron factory in Peenya, died after his two-wheeler crashed into a road divider near the Peenya Industrial Area.

He was not wearing a helmet. He was admitted to hospital, but succumbed to his injuries. Sandeep was riding to Dasarahalli with friends when the accident occurred. Police have registered a case of speeding and negligent driving.

## ◆ IN THE CITY ◆

**GENERAL**

**Nimishamba Devi Jayanthi:** Organised by Nimishamba Devi Temple; OTC Road, Cottonpet; 7.30 am.

**Convocation:** Thaawarchand Gehlot, Dr MC Sudhakar, BL Mungekar to attend; Organised by Dr BR Ambedkar School of Economics University; BASE University Campus, Nagarbhavi; 11.30 am.

**Inauguration of Renovated Building:** Siddaramaiah, DK Shivakumar, Satish Jarkiholi, Krishna Byre Gowda to attend; Organised by Karnataka Administrative Service Officers' Association, 1, Infantry Road; 4 pm.

**CULTURAL**

**Sri Maharshi Valmiki Natakotsava:** Organised by Sindhu Bhairavi Kala Thanda Trust; Nirashrithara Parihara Kendra, Sumanahalli Circle; 3 pm.

**State-level Kannada Theatre Competition:** Organised by Rangasthe; Yuvapatha, Jayanagar 4th Block; 7 pm.

Invites to be published in this column should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

## ◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

**FORECAST**

Partly cloudy sky

**TEMPERATURES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Maximum | 35.0°C |
| Minimum | 23.0°C |
| Rainfall (as of 8:30 am) | NIL |
| Humidity (as of 5:30 pm) | 32% |
| Sunset (Apr 27) | 6:34 pm |
| Sunrise (Apr 28) | 6:01 am |
| Moonrise | 2:18 pm |
| Moonset | 2:16 am |

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

## Two arrested as police recover 20 stolen two-wheelers

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Twenty stolen two-wheelers worth Rs 15 lakh have been recovered after the arrest of two suspected thieves, Thalaghattapura police said.

Police were acting on a complaint that a two-wheeler was stolen near a temple in the area on March 20.

During the investigation, they gathered information through informants and arrested the suspects near NICE Road on April 16, along with a stolen two-wheeler.

On interrogation, the suspects revealed their involvement in stealing two-wheelers across the city and disclosed that the vehicles were hidden at different locations, including a mango grove near Pipeline Road, vacant land beside Rajahamsa Garden, and a BDA site at Nagegowdana Palya.

Police recovered 20 stolen two-wheelers from these locations.

The arrests helped police identify and solve 20 cases in Bengaluru.

On April 17, a city court remanded the suspects to judicial custody.

## Need a hand? Write to us

**Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner. Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.**

**The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @deccanherald.co.in**

### Senior citizen facilities on airport buses

The BMTC offers concessional fares and reserved seats for senior citizens on all its buses, including Volvo services across the city.

However, these facilities are not extended on airport routes, which is illogical.

Even if the BMTC assumes that air travellers can forgo fare concessions, it should at least provide reserved seating for senior citizens.

**H K Bhatta**
AECS Layout, Kundalahalli

### Software glitch in e-khata correction system

I applied for an e-khata correction in January 2026. The application status on the e-Aasthi portal shows it was approved on January 14, 2026.

However, despite paying Rs 125 multiple times to download the corrected e-khata, I have received the old version each time.

Officials and the GBA e-khata helpline have cited a software glitch and expressed inability to resolve the issue, asking me to wait indefinitely for action from the technical team.

I urge the authorities to fix the glitch on priority and notify applicants via SMS once corrected e-khatas are available for download.

This issue requires the attention of Special Commissioner (Revenue) Munish Moudgil, as citizens are forced into repeated visits and unnecessary payments to check the status of their applications.

**Srishyla MV**
Rajajinagar

Bengaluru Monday, April 27, 2026 Pages 16 Vol 79 No 116 ₹7

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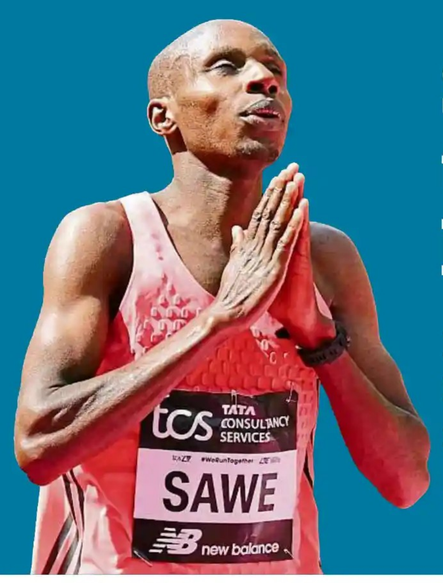



# Sawe breaks two-hour barrier

Kenyan wins London Marathon men's race with a record time of 1:59:30

*Page 13*

**Nation**

**Khera moves SC against Gauhati HC's rejection of anticipatory bail** P.8

**Business**

**India, New Zealand to sign free-trade agreement today** P.10

**Nation**

Assam-like NRC likely in Manipur P.9

**Nation**

Russian oil details confidential: CIC P.8

## Quickly

### Swiss plane suffers snag, 4 injured

A Zurich-bound Swiss International Air Lines' plane carrying 245 people aborted takeoff at the Delhi airport early morning on Sunday due to an engine issue, following which a full emergency was declared and passengers were evacuated, with four of them suffering injuries, according to the airline. There were 232 passengers and 13 crew members onboard the A330-300 aircraft.
Details on Page 9

### Birthday boy shoots dead 3 in UP

A birthday party in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district turned into a bloody clash after the birthday boy, allegedly following a dispute over smearing cake on his face, shot his three friends dead. According to the police sources in Lucknow, the incident happened late on Saturday night at a gym in Khurja town where one Jeetu Saini had thrown a birthday party.
Details on Page 9

### Bullets fired at woman lawyer's house

Unidentified miscreants allegedly opened fire at the residence of a woman advocate in Belagavi during the early hours of Sunday, police said. The incident occurred between 1 am and 2 am at the house of advocate Pooja Kakatkar, located on Mandoli Road, they said.

### Hindu man found hanging in Bangladesh

Hindu temple caretaker was found hanging from a tree three days after he went missing from his home in southeastern Bangladesh, a minority group said and demanded stern action against the perpetrators. Nayan Sadhu (40) was a resident of Dohazari in Chhattogram district.
Details on Page 12

# Trump evacuated as shooter opens fire at Washington gala

**Administration officials were the likely targets**

WASHINGTON, AGENCIES

US Secret Service agents bundled Donald Trump from the stage as shots rang out Saturday at a media gala, in what the president later described as an attack by a "would-be assassin."

Armed guards opened fire at the gunman who charged through a security checkpoint just outside the ballroom of the hotel where Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, senior government officials and hundreds of other guests had gathered.

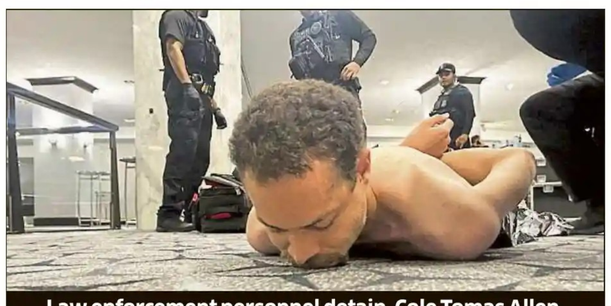
People dived under tables in chaotic scenes as Secret Service teams swarmed into the glitzy White House Correspondents' Association dinner held annually at the Washington Hilton in the US capital.

The accused had written about targeting Trump administration officials, and his family raised concerns with law enforcement before the event, President Donald Trump said Sunday in an interview on Fox News Channel.

The accused gunman's family had alerted police in Connecticut, President Trump said, revealing new details about a chaotic encounter that disrupted one of Washington's glitziest annual events.

"It does appear that he did, in fact, have set out to target folks that work in the administration, likely including the president," Blanche told NBC News' "Meet the Press," adding that the suspect likely traveled by train from Los Angeles to Chicago and then to Washington.

The suspect is believed to have purchased the two firearms he carried within the last couple of years, Blanche said.
▸ Shooting, Page 2
Related reports, Page 12



Law enforcement personnel detain, Cole Tomas Allen, a suspect in the shooting incident at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner. REUTERS

**Who is the suspect?**

**The suspected attacker has been identified by news media as Cole Tomas Allen (31)**

- US officials have not yet publicly confirmed his identity
- A LinkedIn profile appeared to match the photo shared by Trump
- On the social media profile, Allen claimed to be an engineer with a passion for game development

- C2 Education named Allen as "teacher of the month" in December 2024
- A former teammate described him as "borderline genius" and "super stable"

"I extend my best wishes for their continued safety and well-being. Violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned

**Narendra Modi, PM**

### US-Iran peace hopes fade

**Hopes of reviving peace efforts in the US-Israeli war with Iran receded on Sunday as Iran's foreign minister returned to Pakistan despite the absence of US counterparts after President Donald Trump told envoys not to resume talks.**
Details on Page 12

# Heavy metals, chemicals choke Cauvery: Study

**Increased human activities leading to high pollution**

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

As governments continue to gloss over the massive pollution load in the Cauvery river, the Union government's Wildlife Institute of India has found copper, mercury and lead exceeding permissible levels in the river's sediment. Phthalates, the chemicals which disturb the endocrine system, were "most abundant" in the water.

The study, involving 19 researchers, looked into the ecological status of the 805 km-long river that feeds crores of people in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. They studied an 85-km stretch by dividing the river into upper, middle and lower zones. Segments of 5 km were picked from each zone in 17 stretches, covering about 10% of the river's total length.

Increased human activities contributed to high pollution in midle and lower zones. Samples of water and sediment were collected separately before and after the monsoon. Test of sediments established high concentration of heavy metals while fish samples showed a mix of phthalate esters as well as heavy metals that can accumulate over time and cause major health problems.
▸ Cauvery toxic, Page 2

**Deadly cocktail**

- **Lead** content **59.75 mg/kg**, nearly double the 35 mg/kg maximum limit
- **Copper** found at **97 mg/kg** against the permissible level of 36 mg/kg
- **Mercury** content in river **0.37 mg/kg** compared to permissible limit of 0.17 mg/kg

### Defector MPs: AAP petitions RS chairman

**NEW DELHI, DHNS:** AAP on Sunday submitted a petition to Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan seeking the disqualification of seven MPs who defected to the BJP by announcing a merger.

The party's Rajya Sabha floor leader Sanjay Singh told reporters on Sunday that the move by the seven MPs, including Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak, amounted to defection under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution and the anti-defection law.
Details on Page 8

# Govt scraps lease as prime land sub-let to corporate hospital

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

The state government has cancelled a 1991 lease agreement with Imperial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre Ltd pertaining to the five-acre property on Bannerghatta Road.

The decision, which brings closure to a matter that has seen prolonged litigation, was taken on the grounds that the private entity sub-leased the prime land to a super-speciality hospital violating lease conditions.

The land – part of survey number 154/11 of Bilekahalli village – was leased to Imperial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre Ltd for establishing "a cancer cure and research centre". However, the government noted that the land has been used by a private entity to run a super-speciality hospital. The property—situated opposite IIMB — is valued at hundreds crores of rupees.

This is not the first time the government has attempted to cancel the 1991 lease.

In March 2015, the Revenue Department initiated a similar move under the Karnataka Land Allotment Rules, 1969. It also ordered the lessee to transfer the existing building to Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology in line with the original purpose of allotment.
▸ Lease, Page 2

**Terms violated**

- Land on Bannerghatta Road was leased to Imperial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre Ltd for establishing "a cancer cure and research centre"
- Government noted that the land has been used by a private entity to run a super-speciality hospital
- The property – situated opposite IIMB campus – is valued at hundreds crores of rupees

### Centre-Ladakh talks on UT's future to resume on May 22

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

Sonam Wangchuk during a protest for Ladakh's statehood. PTI FILE

Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Sunday announced that talks between the Centre and Ladakh's civil society groupings will resume on May 22, reviving a stalled dialogue process over the Union Territory's political future.

The meeting, to be held at the level of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), will bring representatives of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) back to the negotiating table after the last round of discussions in early February failed to yield a breakthrough.

The announcement by the Lieutenant-Governor comes just days ahead of Home Minister Amit Shah's scheduled two-day visit to Ladakh, signalling renewed outreach by the Union government in the strategically sensitive region.

The LAB and KDA — umbrella bodies representing political, social and religious organisations in Leh and Kargil — have been jointly engaging with the Centre since 2021, following Ladakh's reorganisation as a Union Territory in 2019.

Both groups have consistently pushed a set of core demands: full statehood for Ladakh, constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule, creation of a separate public service commission, and separate parliamentary representation for Leh and Kargil.
▸ Ladakh, Page 2

### What has to happen will happen: DKS

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday refused to openly comment about his chief ministerial ambitions, but reiterated his position that "whatever has to happen will happen".

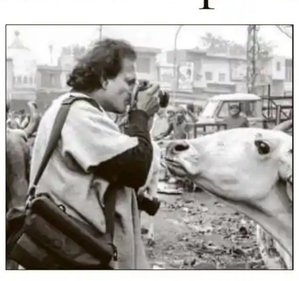
Speaking to reporters, Shivakumar noted that both he and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah have explained that they will abide by the high command's decision.

Shivakumar's comment comes amid speculations that the Congress high command may take a decision on the chief ministership in Karnataka after the election results of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and Pondicherry are announced on May 4.

"We have no problem. There is no politics either. Whatever has been decided will come into effect," he said.

### Raghu Rai: The photographer as an artist

NEW DELHI, PTI



Raghu Rai
(1942-2026)

Raghu Rai, one of India's best known photographers who distilled the essence of an evolving India and its people through his lens, died at a private hospital in New Delhi on Sunday. He was 83.

"Dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer two years ago but he was cured. Then it spread to the stomach, that too was cured. Recently, the cancer spread to his brain and then there were age-related issues too," Nitin Rai, photographer and Rai's son, said. He is survived by wife Gurmeet, son Nitin and daughters Lagan, Avani and Purvai.

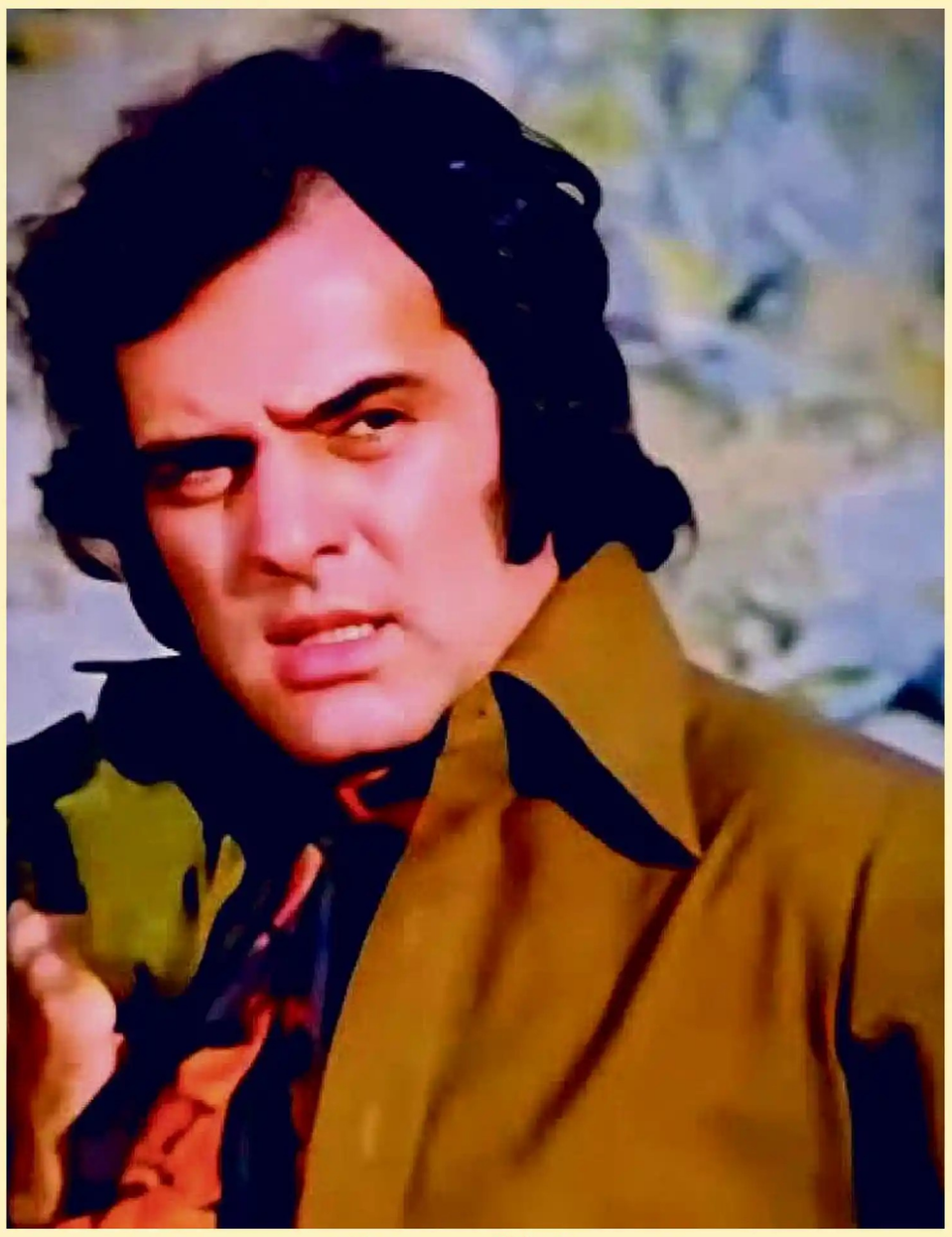
Born on December 18, 1942, in Jhang, Punjab (now in Pakistan), Rai was qualified as a civil engineer and only took up photography at 23 before joining The Statesman as its chief photographer in 1966.

Life from that point onwards was anything but a blur. Over the next six decades, Rai's lens froze for posterity fleeting moments with unmatched clarity, documenting a growing India's socio-political landscape.

A protege of Henri Cartier-Bresson, Rai shot some of the most significant events in Indian modern history, including the Bangladesh refugee crisis of 1972 and the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984.

He recorded India's social, political and spiritual shades in his portraits of leading figures, including Indira Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Satyajit Ray, Hariprasad Chaurasia and Bismillah Khan, which offered hitherto unknown perspectives into their lives. Rai's camera caught the ordinary, the everyperson, with equal, if not more, sensibility and sensitivity.
▸ Raghu Rai, Page 4

In Fond Memory of a Legend



Feroz Khan
(25-09-1939 - 27-04-2009)

Those we love don't go away, They walk beside us every day
Unseen, unheard, but always near, Still loved, still missed and very dear

Deeply loved and cherished, forever missed....
from his beloved Brothers Shahrukh Khan and family

# Relocation of over 450 families from Bhimgad Sanctuary remains on paper

## Finding suitable land for relocation is major challenge: DCF

**PAVAN KUMAR H**
BHIMGAD WILDLIFE SANCTUARY (BELAGAVI DIST), DHNS

Over 450 families are waiting for relocation from Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary, a critical tiger and elephant corridor in Belagavi, a year after they applied for voluntary relocation.

While 27 families from Talewadi hamlet received the first installment cheque for Rs 10 lakh each last May, the applications of other families have not been processed yet.

Senior forest officials say that finding suitable land to relocate these families, while ensuring social and cultural compatibility, is one of the major challenges in the relocation process.

Of the 13 hamlets, residents of at least nine are willing to relocate immediately. However, they are demanding that the state government increase the displacement package from the current Rs 15 lakh per family. They are also seeking a small portion of land for cultivation to sustain their livelihood. However, the government is sticking to the package announced by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, under which each family will receive Rs 15 lakh, along with an additional Rs 15 lakh per person for children aged 18 and above.

A hamlet inside the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary. Of the 13 hamlets, residents of at least nine are willing to relocate from the sanctuary immediately. DH PHOTO

Life is not easy inside this forest patch of the Western Ghats. Residents have to travel around 25 km to reach the nearest health centres. Due to the tough terrain, emergency services are unable to reach those in need, and during the monsoon, almost 11 of these villages get cut off from the mainland due to overflowing streams.

Sumitra Dashrath Gowda, a resident of Pastoli hamlet, says, "We submitted the documents for relocation long ago, but things haven't moved much. Rs 15 lakh for a family is too little. We cannot sustain a dignified life with such a meager amount. We have been demanding that the government provide us agricultural land and a house. Unless our demands are met, we will not move out of the forest."

However, there are also forest dwellers who are unwilling to relocate. For residents of Gavali, one of the largest hamlets inside the sanctuary, the Mirashis (priests) have opposed relocation. "We cannot defy our gods and move out of the forest," says Baban Devali. He adds that instead of relocation, the government should repair or build permanent bridges over streams to improve transport.

Prahlad Patel, a resident of Kongla, says that a section of the village does not trust the government's relocation programme. "We are told that the relocation programme taken up by the forest department is illegal. If it were as per the rules, then why has it taken almost a year for the residents of Talewadi to move out, when the rules say relocation should be completed in six months?"

**H KRANTI N E**
Belagavi DCF

"Finding suitable land for relocation is the biggest challenge. We want forest dwellers to relocate to places that are socially and culturally similar to their earlier dwelling areas. In the next two to three months, we will expedite the relocation process.

Janardhan Vittal Varak, a beneficiary of the relocation programme, says that the process was delayed as they could not find suitable agricultural land. His new settlement, Manturga, is just five kilometres from Khanapur. "Manturga has schools up to high school level. As a construction worker, I can get better opportunities and healthcare."

Last year, a Dharwad-based activist, Raghavendra, had written to the state and Central governments requesting an immediate halt to the relocation, alleging that "rules are not being followed."

Belagavi DCF Kranti N E said, "For two months, we verified all documents and rules to ensure that the relocation work was carried out as per the provisions."

# Trump evacuated as shooter opens fire at Washington gala

Shooting, from Page 1

Video footage shows Trump and his wife sitting at a banquet table on stage in conversation with someone when a commotion at the rear of the ballroom - caused by the noise of gunshots - triggers a ripple of gasps through the room.

Security personnel in combat fatigues stormed the stage pointing rifles into the ballroom as Trump, his wife Melania and Vice President JD Vance were evacuated. Cabinet members who had been sitting at tables dotted around the vast room were escorted out by their security details one by one.

Trump stayed backstage for about an hour after being hustled from the stage. He later said he had not wanted to leave the event, a remark that echoed images of him defiantly pumping his fist after narrowly escaping an assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania, in 2024.

Trump told reporters at a late-night White House briefing that he believed he was the target of the attack. He said the Secret Service officer was saved by his bulletproof vest and was in "good shape."

US Secret Service spokesperson Anthony Guglielmi confirmed the officer had been released from a hospital. Trump posted surveillance camera footage of the gunman sprinting past security as guards drew their weapons. The man was detained at the scene.

"They seem to think he was a lone wolf, and I feel that too," the president said at a news conference at the White House shortly after the incident.

He added that the venue was "not a particularly secure" facility, as questions swirled about the president's safety.

Trump told reporters that the authorities have gone to the suspect's apartment and "I guess he lives in California."

## BMTC sports and cultural festival

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** The Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) organised the Sports and Cultural Festival 2026 at Sri Venkatadri Kalyana Mantapa in Kathriguppe on Friday.

Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy distributed prizes and awards to the winners. He also handed over insurance compensation to the dependents of employees who passed away while in service, and provided financial aid for the education of meritorious children of serving employees.

BMTC Chairman V S Aradhya, Vice-Chairman Niketh Raj M, Managing Director Shivakumar KB, Director (Security and Vigilance) Abdul Ahad, and other senior officials were present, according to a press release.

## Inter-collegiate fest at Soundarya Institute of Management and Science

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Soundarya Institute of Management and Science hosted 'Sampravega 2K26', a national-level inter-collegiate fest, on April 16 and 17.

The fest was inaugurated by Babu Chiriankandath Joseph, Chairman and Managing Director of White Group, along with alumnus Lohith R, Manager and Second Vice-President at Northern Trust Company, Bengaluru.

Soundarya Educational Trust Chairman Soundarya P Manjappa; Managing Director Suneetha Manjappa; CEO Keerthan Kumar M; Managing Trustees Varun Kumar and Nishmitha Varun; Dr Prakash HS, Principal and Director of SIMS; and Dr Vishwas Puttaswamy, Principal of Soundarya College of Law, were present at the inaugural ceremony.

The fest revolved around the theme 'Metamorphosis–The Power of Transformation' and featured over 24 events across management, technical, and cultural domains. More than 100 colleges from Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh participated.

The events were judged by a panel of professionals and artists, including choreographer Santhu Master, singer-composer Manasa Holla, and actor-model Kavya Shastri.

Pop singer and actor Sangeetha Rajeev performed at the valedictory ceremony, while band BARFI presented a live concert, according to a press release.

## Centre-Ladakh talks to resume...

Ladakh, from Page 1

They argue these measures are essential to protect Ladakh's fragile ecology, land rights, employment opportunities and cultural identity. The Centre, on its part, has so expressed reservations over granting statehood and Sixth Schedule status, citing administrative and financial considerations, and has explored alternative governance arrangements.

Officials indicated that the May 22 meeting is expected to revisit the pending demands and explore "mutually acceptable solutions," although no formal agenda has been publicly outlined.

### 'Strategic significance'

The resumption of talks also carries strategic significance given Ladakh's location along the borders with China and Pakistan, and the Centre's emphasis on maintaining stability while addressing local aspirations. With both sides holding firm positions, the upcoming meeting is likely to be a crucial test of whether sustained engagement can translate into a concrete roadmap, or whether the long-running negotiations will continue without a decisive outcome.

## Govt scraps lease as prime land...

Lease, from Page 1

However, Imperial Hospital and Research Centre challenged the order by approaching the high court with a writ petition (17797/2018). In October 2021, the court put brakes on the government order to cancel the lease and ruled that the government must first give the petitioner an opportunity before passing the order.

Subsequently, in March 2022, the department served a notice on the chief executive officer (CEO) of Imperial Hospital and Research Centre seeking a reply in 15 days. The lessee wrote back, stating that it had not violated any of the lease conditions. It also denied all other charges.

Not convinced with the response, the Revenue Department concluded that Imperial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre Ltd had indeed violated the lease conditions by noting that the lessee has sub-leased the land to Apollo Hospital Enterprises Ltd.

In the latest order in February 2026, the department also refused to accept the justifications provided by the private firm and decided to revoke the lease. A 2017 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Grant, Lease, Eviction of Encroachment and Regularisation of Unauthorised Occupation of Government Lands had exposed that the lessee had sub-let the land — meant for cancer research institute — to another hospital. "The land was not resumed back despite a 2015 government order," it noted.

A spokesperson for Apollo Hospitals declined to comment, stating that the subject is sub judice.


## PUBLIC NOTICE

Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Limited, acting as Trustee of Arcil-Trust-2025-009 ("ARCIL"), had earlier issued a notice under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 to Cornerstone Properties Private Limited, Cornerstone Bay East Developers Private Limited and Chrysolite Property Developments Private Limited ("Borrowers"), inter-alia including **Brigade Cornerstone Utopia** Phase 1 and Phase 2, in respect of financial facilities originally availed from L&T Finance Limited and subsequently assigned to ARCIL. The said notice dated 29.03.2025 was published in Deccan Herald dated 15.05.2025 and Prajavani dated 16.05.2025.

Subsequent thereto, the parties entered into discussions and have resolved the matter amicably. In light of the aforesaid, all earlier issued publications/legal proceedings initiated in the aforementioned newspapers, inter-alia including **Brigade Cornerstone Utopia** Phase 1 and Phase 2, stand withdrawn.

This publication is issued for information of all concerned.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Authorised Signatory Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Limited (Trustee of Arcil-Trust-2025-009)** | **Authorised Signatory Cornerstone Properties Private Limited, Cornerstone Bay East Developers Private Limited & Chrysolite Property Developments Private Limited** |

**Place : Bangalore**
**Date : 27.04.2026**


## 29TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION

St. Joseph's Institute of Management
28/1 Primrose Road, Off M.G. Road, Bengaluru 560025
SJIM
29th
Annual Convocation
A Celebration of Milestones and new Beginnings
23rd April 2026 | Thursday | 4:00 PM

St Joseph's Institute of Management (SJIM) marked its 29th Annual Convocation on April 23. (L-R) SJIM Director Rev Dr Roshan David Pereira; Chief Guest GV Rao, CSR Director, Volvo India; SJIM Chairman and Provincial of the Karnataka Jesuit Province Rev Fr Dionysius Vaz; Vice-President and Rector Rev Dr Daniel Fernandes; and Dean Dr Rajiv Noronha graced the occasion.

## Police register FIRs after back-to-back animal cruelty cases

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Police in eastern Bengaluru's KR Puram have registered criminal cases following back-to-back incidents of cruelty against stray dogs.

On April 25, a coconut vendor allegedly attacked a stray dog with a knife near Muniyappa Layout. The dog sustained grievous injuries and was taken to a veterinary hospital for treatment. A case has been registered under relevant sections of the BNS and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

In a separate incident on April 21, a construction worker allegedly killed a stray dog at a building site near Ramamurthy Nagar. According to the FIR, the worker claimed the dog was rabid.

# Heavy metals, chemicals turning Cauvery toxic: WII

Cauvery toxic, from Page 1

The water samples, not from dry seasons, showed modest levels of heavy metals.

At least one sediment sample showed lead, a highly toxic substance, at 59.75 mg/kg, nearly double the 35 mg/kg maximum limit set by the Canadian Sediment Quality Guidelines.

Copper, which damages liver and kidney, was at 97 mg/kg against the permissible level of 36 mg/kg while mercury, which primarily harms nervous system, was 0.37 mg/kg compared to 0.17 mg/kg.

In the water samples, chromium (44 microgram/litre) came closer to the World Health Organisation's safety limit of 50 microgram/litre while zinc and cadmium levels exceeded the Canadian Water Quality guidelines.

However, both the sediment and water had "abundant" levels of the endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) which cause infertility and cancer.

Phthalate esters at 17,793 nanogram/litre, Bisphenol A at 336.27 nanogram/litre, Polychlorinated biphenyl at 64.64 nanogram/litre, organochlorine pesticides at 94.11 nanogram/litre and Organophosphorus at 104.67 nanogram/litre among others were listed as major contaminants.

Notably, the samples were not picked during February-May months, when the concentration of the contaminants are much higher and exposes both people and wildlife to deadly cocktail of heavy metals and chemicals. During the remaining seasons, the flow of waters would dilute the concentration. To a question, lead author of the report Syed Ainul Hussain from WII noted that it was a "torch-bearer study" that points both academics and policymakers to what needs to be done.

"What we need are studies covering the entire stretch of Cauvery. The study provides an opportunity to state and the Union governments to prioritise river conservation," he said.

Ruchi Badola from WII, the co-author of the study, said they will propose next phase of the study to understand the impact of the contaminants on wildlife. "We have sought extension of the current study so that we can coordinate with stakeholders. We will also propose to study the impact of contaminants on wildlife in the next phase," she added.

Nirmala Gowda of Mapping Malnad, who had studied the contamination of Cauvery's tributaries, noted that even when measured in non-summer months, the contaminants are high: "Of specific concern is the finding of copious EDCs, including the triclosan that interferes with the hormonal system even at low concentrations and affects reproductive health, menstrual cycles, and fetal development. Many countries have already phased out triclosan from many products. We continue to lag behind."

She said a major shortcoming of the study, however, was its failure to capture toxic compounds like dioxins and furans that are formed during burning of waste.

# Agriculture tourism remains a non-starter in Karnataka

## Aims to improve livelihood of farming community

GAYATHRI V RAJ
MYSURU, DHNS

The Agriculture Tourism (agri-tourism) concept formulated by the Karnataka government in its 2020-26 tourism policy to improve the livelihood of farming community and also to boost tourism activity, is yet to take off in the state.

The state government's delay in forming proper guidelines, high initial investment costs, lack of training for farmers, and limited government support are said to be the main reasons for the concept to remain a non-starter.

Acknowledging the importance of tourism as a priority sector in the state, the Karnataka government decided to embark upon agri-tourism to introduce various aspects of agriculture and rural life to urbanites. It was also intended to increase the income of farmers and boost tourism economy.

Karnataka has seen immense growth in domestic tourist visits, which is around 12% of the overall domestic tourist visits in India.

The delay in implementing agri-tourism in Karnataka is primarily due to lack of specialised policy support, limited financial capital, poor rural infrastructure, lack of training and awareness among farmers, difficulties in providing amenities and weak marketing, says Sanjay, a farmer in Malavalli of Mandya district.

Several private organisations have taken permission from local authorities for conducting activities similar to agri-tourism at some places in Mandya district. DH FILE PHOTO

A meeting was conducted by the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation, Tourism and Agriculture departments recently, with the officials seeking the opinion of farmers on implementing agri-tourism.

A few private organisations have taken permission from local authorities for conducting activities similar to agri-tourism at some places in Mandya district. But proper guidelines are required from the government.

Speaking to *DH*, Tourism Department Joint Director H Janardhan said that the proposal of developing agri-tourism was being taken up by the Tourism department, in association with the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) and Agriculture department. A proposal has been submitted to the government and guidelines are awaited. Once the government issues the guidelines, it will be implemented, he said.

According to an officer in the KSTDC, tourism department is the authority to issue guidelines and operate agri-tourism across Karnataka.

The government has brought out a policy, but guidelines have not been finalised. Only after the official guidelines are issued, a decision will be taken on how to operate agri-tourism. However, the KSTDC, which is a business organisation, will extend support and include it in its tour packages, the officer explained.

# Work on installation of crest gates at TB Dam concludes

HOSAPETE (VIJAYANAGARA DISTRICT), DHNS

A view of the Tungabhadra dam after the installation of new crest gates.

Work on the installation of new crest gates at the Tungabhadra Dam was completed on Saturday thereby ensuring the reservoir's ability to irrigate the 15 lakh acres of land in the region should the water level at the dam reach its maximum capacity this year.

Technical expert Kannayya Naidu who visited the dam on April 14 expressed satisfaction with the design and installation of the new crest gates. He had also exuded confidence of the work concluding before the end of April, and accordingly, work has been completed much ahead of time.

Major work having been concluded, miscellaneous things such as welding and painting needed to be completed, said Tungabhadra Board secretary B R K Reddy. "The chain links are slated to arrive in the second week of May. All in all, by the end of May, the reservoir will be ready to store water up to its maximum capacity," Reddy said.

On the August 10, 2024, when the water level at the Tungabhadra dam rose to 1,633 feet, the crest gate number 19 was washed away by the sheer force of the gushing waters. Naidu was called in, and a stoplog gate installed to prevent further loss of water.

However, experts who were brought in to assess the condition of the 73-year-old dam called on the government to replace all the crest gates. However, new crest gates could not be installed ahead of the 2025 monsoon, and the reservoir's storage capacity was restricted to 80tmcft as a consequence, compelling the authorities to release the excess water to the river. Work on the installation of new crest gates finally commenced on December 24, 2025.

# Two children drown in farm pond

**MADHUGIRI (TUMAKURU DISTRICT), DHNS:** Two children drowned after they slipped and fell into a farm pond near Benakanahalli under Midigeshi hobli of Madhugiri taluk on Sunday.

The deceased, Suchitra, 11 and Ravindra, 9, were children of Manjunath, a resident of Kasaapura village under Midigeshi hobli.

The children had gone to rear goats. They felt thirsty and went to the farm pond to quench their thirst but accidentally fell and drowned. The bodies were shifted to government hospital at Madhugiri for post mortem.

A case has been registered by Midigeshi police station. The incident is heart wrenching. Parents, during summer vacation, should ensure that their children stay away from river, tank, well and farm ponds, said Block Education Officer K N Hanumantharayappa.

# Farmer killed in jumbo attack in Kanakapura

**KANAKAPURA (BENGALURU SOUTH DIST), DHNS:** A farmer who was on his way to his house was reportedly killed by a wild jumbo at Cheelandavadi under Uyyamballi hobli of Kanakapura taluk on Saturday night. However, the incident came to light on Sunday morning.

The deceased, Shivu (53), is survived by his wife and two children. He was staying alone in the village as his wife was working at a plantation farm, while both his children were working in Harohalli.

The incident occurred when Shivu was walking towards his house, built on his farmland which is on the outskirts of the village. The elephant attacked from behind and killed him.

On Sunday morning, sheep and cattle rearers found his body and told villagers who in turn informed forest department. The forest personnel rushed to spot and shifted the body to Government Hospital in Kanakapura.

Incidentally, Cheelandavadi is inside the forest. But the borders of the village were secured with solar fence to prevent elephants from straying inside. However, on Saturday night the elephant broke through fencing and attacked Shivu.

Bengaluru Cooperative Milk Union Ltd President D K Suresh visited the spot and provided cash compensation to Shivu's family in his personal capacity.

He told forest officials that the farmer was too poor and that Rs 5 lakh compensation should be provided immediately and the remaining Rs 15 lakh should be paid at the earliest.

# Ahinda should function beyond electoral politics: Satish Jarkiholi

HUBBALLI, DHNS

Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi expressed concern that despite being in power, the Congress government has not delivered assurances for Ahinda communities (minorities, backward classes, and Dalits), due to "internal resistance" within the system.

Inaugurating the state-level seminar titled "25 Years of Ahinda Struggle, Achievements and Resolve" in Hubballi on Sunday, Ahinda leader Jarkiholi said the movement, which has evolved over the past two-and-a-half decade, now needs to shift its strategy.

"Even after large conventions and mobilisations, the expected social transformation has not come through. We must redefine our approach and find new pathways for protection and progress," he said.

He announced the launch of a second phase of the Ahinda movement, which will continue until May 2028, and expressed confidence that it could trigger a "new social churn" in the state. Ahinda should function beyond electoral politics, he said.

Clarifying that the initiative is not aimed at political gain, Jarkiholi said Ahinda office-bearers must act as a bridge between the government and marginalised communities, ensuring awareness and access to welfare measures.

He also voiced concern over recent criticism of 12th-century social reformer Basavanna. "If such narratives go unchallenged, there may come a time when people even question his existence. Society must respond firmly using all platforms, including social media," he said.

Retired Karnataka High Court judge Justice H N Nagamohan Das warned against attempts to reinterpret constitutional provisions in ways that dilute social justice.

"There are forces trying to portray sections of the Constitution as irrelevant. Safeguarding constitutional values must remain a priority," he said.

"There is a need to change the nature of the movement by using science and technology in the days to come, and that the objective of Ahinda should be to safeguard the welfare of all sections of society," he noted.

He alleged that a systematic effort is underway to blame the Constitution for prevailing challenges and push for its alteration.

## THE JOY OF RUNNING

(1) Participants in TCS World 10K run past Vidhana Soudha in Benglauru on Sunday; (2) A runner dressed as lord Ganapathi carries a message during the marathon; (3) Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir Omar Abdullah participates in the marathon; (4) Runners dressed in saree and cricket gear steal the show; (5) A stray dog steals the spotlight as it runs alongside elite women runners near the finish line during the TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2026.
DH PHOTOS/ B K JANARDHAN, RANJU P, PUSHKAR V

# Principal Dharmadarshi among three Harihar Panchamasali Gurupeeth trustees expelled

DAVANGERE, DHNS

In a new twist to the Harihar Panchamasali Gurupeeth row, the State Veerashaiva-Lingayat Panchamasali Sangh has expelled three trustees of the Gurupeeth, including the principal dharmadarshi B C Umapati, days after the Trust ousted Gurupeeth seer Vachanananda Swami.

"Principal Dharmadarshi B C Umapati, secretary Jyotiprakash and Chandrashekar Pujar, a trustee, have been expelled from the Trust for bringing the differences in the community to the streets. Action was taken for the omissions, commissions and breach of trust," Somanagouda M Patil, state president of Veerashaiva-Lingayat Panchamasali Sangh told reporters on Sunday.

"The decision to expel three trustees was taken on April 13. The decision was not made public due to some personal reasons. The trustees in question were barred from maintaining accounts and bank transactions and taking any decision pertaining to the Gurupeet from April 13 itself," Patil clarified.

"According to the bylaws of the Trust, the Veerashaiva-Lingayat Panchamasali Sangh is fully empowered to take any decision pertaining to the Trust and the Gurupeeth. Of the 11 life trustees, only seven are living. The information about the bylaws was obtained under the Right to Information Act. There is a provision for the Sangh to take action for any lapse/s found in accounts or in any dispute pertaining to the Gurupeeth," Somanagouda Patil said.

"The Trust came into existence in 2008 and the trustees have not furnished details of assets and liabilities in last 18 years. The very purpose of establishing the Gurupeeth was defeated. Not a single educational institution nor hostel was built. The trustees in question misled the community to further their self interests," he charged.

The Trust has fixed April 27 to furnish details of accounts. But we want it (Trust) to provide details of accounts in the presence of the community leaders and the elected representatives in June, he said replying to a query.

Former MLAs Arunkumar Pujar and Nandihalli Halappa, Veerashaiva-Lingayat Panchamasali Sangh state vice-president Shankaregouda Burupanahalli, Karnataka Border Area Development Authority chairman Somanna Bevinamarad and others were present.

# Months after probe demand, MoEF greenlights NH project

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Four months after the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) wrote to the state government seeking a probe into alleged irregularities in the National Highway 766C (Byndoor-Ranebennur) work, activists have questioned the ministry's move to provide in-principle approval for the project by an officer, who recently assumed charge of the post.

In a letter dated November 6, 2025, then Deputy Inspector General of Forests (DIGF), MoEF&CC Regional Office, Praneetha Paul had written to the Forest Department, requesting to "inquire into the matter" of irregularities as listed out by a complaint from Manipal Birding and Conservation Trust (MBCT).

"Take appropriate necessary action, as per law and inform the applicant accordingly under intimation to this office," the letter said.

The complaint had stated that though a stretch of the road (km 20.60 to 37.85) passes through the eco-sensitive zone of the Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, the highway authorities have not disclosed the full scope of the project while applying for the forest clearance, where they sought permission for widening work in only half of the stretch (0.00 km to 20.60 km) outside the ESZ. "This is a clear case of fait accompli," they said, listing other violations.

However, it has now come to light that the MoEF&CC has accorded in principle/stage-1 clearance to the project with no clarity on the inquiry it sought.

"After careful examination of the proposal of the state government, in-principle approval/stage 1 clearance of the central government is hereby granted... for diversion of 4.3789 Ha (10.82 acre) forest land in Golihole, Yalajitha and Thaggarse villages in Byndooru taluk, Udupi district," the ministry's letter signed by new DIGF Yasodha K said.

An activist from MBCT said they have not received any information on the inquiry from either the state or the Union government.

Yasodha did not respond to a query on whether the ministry has received any response from the Forest department regarding the inquiry.

# Modi praises Karma Monastery in Bylakuppe for nature conservation

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the Karma Monastery in Bylakuppe near Mysuru, for its remarkable efforts in nature conservation.

In his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, the prime minister highlighted how Buddhist traditions emphasise a deep connection with nature.

"Lord Buddha attained enlightenment under a tree. Nature is an integral part of our lives," he said, citing the Karma Monastery as a shining example, he said.

A view of Golden Temple at Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement in Periyapatna taluk of Mysuru district. DH FILE PHOTO

The Karma Monastery in Karnataka is spread over 100 acres and has preserved more than 700 native trees, turning the area into a vibrant forest, Modi noted.

The monastery, also known as Karma Kagyu Monastery, is located within the Tibetan Refugee Camp in Bylakuppe, Mysuru district.

The monastery, under the guidance of Guru Karma Samtenlingpa Rinpoche has transformed degraded land into a thriving 100-acre forest conservation zone.

It operates under the Bodhi Sattva Trust, which was established in 1995 by Rinpoche, with the mission of environmental conservation and nature rejuvenation.

The Trust also runs the Eco Nalanda School, a Gurukul-style institution, where monks receive education in academics, alongside training in sustainable living practices.

While extending greetings on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, Prime Minister Modi said the life and teachings of Bhagwan Gautam Buddha remain highly relevant in today's world.

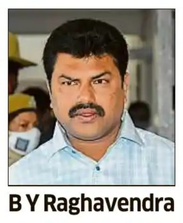
"Amid the tensions and conflicts the world is witnessing today, Buddha's message of peace and compassion has become even more important," Modi.

The PM also spoke about Drubpon Otzer Rinpoche, a Ladakhi monk from Drepung, who is actively spreading Lord Buddha's teachings in Chile, South America.

Modi mentioned the Stupa built in the Cochiguaz Valley, which helps people experience peace through meditation and compassion. "India's ancient traditions are reaching every corner of the world. It truly makes one proud to see people from far-flung regions connecting with these teachings," Modi said.

# No proposal for nuclear power plant in Shivamogga's Besuru, says MP Raghavendra

**SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS:** Shimoga MP B Y Raghavendra dismissed rumours about the proposed nuclear plant at Besuru village in Sagar taluk and that the fears among residents are unnecessary.



B Y Raghavendra

The National Thermal Development Corporation (NTPC), which had forayed into nuclear energy, had proposed sites in Vijayapura, Koppal, Raichur, Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada districts, for setting up a nuclear power plant in the state.

The state government has suggested the NTPC to conduct a geological and geotechnical study for site suitability.

"The Shivamogga deputy commissioner has clarified that the state government has not received any formal proposal for establishing a nuclear power plant in the district," the MP said.

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46th ANNIVERSARY

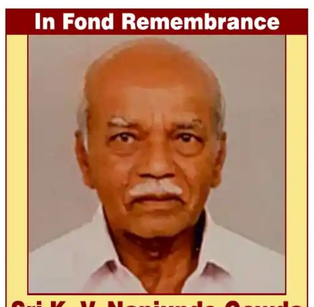
IN LOVING MEMORY OF

GEORGE MATHIAS
Died: 27-04-1980

YOU LIVE IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER

CHILDREN,
GRAND CHILDREN

In Fond Remembrance



Sri K. V. Nanjunde Gowda
Retd. Deputy Director, Directorate of Technical Education, Govt of Karnataka
12.06.1938 - 27.04.2021
Time passes memories stay. Loved ones don't go away, they walk beside us everyday unseen, unheard but always near. We miss you every day.
Deeply mourned by: wife Ratnamma, Meshtru Family & Pillappanavara Doddappaiah Family, Kotigaanahalli , Kolar

OBITUARY

Mrs. Neela Suri
You were our shining, guiding light
God has recalled your soul so bright
Cremation for Mrs. Neela Suri on Tuesday, 28th April, 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM at Hebbal Crematorium.
Fondly remembered by: The New Millennium School Family and all her students.
May the departed soul find Moksha and Eternal Peace
"Om Shanti"

# Extreme weather events threaten more than a third of wildlife by 2085: Study

MUMBAI, DHNS

More than a third of wildlife habitats on land will suffer multiple extreme weather events by 2085 due to climate change, according to a new study to be published in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*.

The study, authored by an international team of 18 scientists, and led by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), charted the change in droughts, heatwaves, river floods and wildfires for amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles globally. Extreme weather events can cause mass mortality of animals and reduce populations significantly. Heatwaves are one of the most frequent and damaging extreme weather events; the 2019-20 Australian heatwave killed more than 72,000 flying foxes.

According to this study, in 2000, just 18% of species' habitats were exposed to heatwaves. This will rise to 65% by 2085 if we stick to the Paris Agreement targets, but 93% on our current climate trajectory. There have been 100 documented cases where an extreme weather event caused a population decline of more than 25%, and 31 records of a species disappearing locally after such an event. "I think climate change, and in particular extreme events, are still really being underestimated when it comes to conservation planning. It's not just going to be a gradual shift of temperature over many years," commented lead author Stefanie Heinicke, a postdoctoral researcher at PIK. According to the study, two or more extreme weather events hitting wildlife in close succession often makes the damage even worse. After the 2019-2020 'Black Summer' fires in Australia, plant and animal species declined 27-40% more in areas where the fires were preceded by drought.

Species with small habitat ranges face particularly severe risks, such as the Carnaby's Black Cockatoo which declined 60% due to the 2011 Western Australian heatwave. In the year 2000 no bird species faced having more than 75% of their habitat range exposed to heatwaves — this would rise to nearly 3,800 bird species by 2085 if we stick to the Paris Agreement targets and more than 9,800 bird species on our current trajectory. Cutting fossil fuel use rapidly would more than halve the number of bird species affected by heatwaves.

This study is likely the first to quantify wildfire exposure for animals. In 2020, wildfires in the Pantanal in Latin America killed an estimated 17 million vertebrate animals. In the year 2000 only 11 amphibian species globally had more than 25% of their habitat range exposed to wildfires.

## Speaker Khader finishes fourth in Dirt Prix event

▸ **MANGALURU, PTI:** Legislative Assembly Speaker U T Khader on Sunday finished fourth in a dirt track racing event organised by the Indian Motor Sports Club here.

Driving a Volkswagen Polo GT, he narrowly missed a podium finish, ending just seconds behind the third-place finisher.

An avid motorsport enthusiast, Khader said he continues to follow motorsport and enjoys driving, describing the experience as a "refreshing change" from his official responsibilities.

# Raghu Rai, man behind iconic images, dies at 83

**Raghu Rai, from Page 1**

The mundane was made extraordinary, often in black and white, as if trying to soften the edges of life's ruggedness.

In an interview in 2023, Rai said the best thing about capturing moments on camera is coming face-to-face with questions about life and its ever-changing nature. "It's been more than 55 years but the most powerful part about photography is - life and nature are ever changing and ever challenging and that shakes you up," the veteran photographer had said.

His pictures live on, seared into India's collective memory. One of the most haunting images that came out of the Bhopal disaster is that of an infant, eyes open forever in a cold dark gaze, as a hand caresses the child into an eternal slumber.

Another picture, among his most telling perhaps, shows a pensive group of Congress ministers, all male, standing huddled around Indira Gandhi as she sits at her desk. The photo is simply captioned: "Indira Gandhi with Congress men, Delhi, 1967".

The contrast, while stark, between the two images, conjures up the shadow of a photojournalist standing too close for comfort to his subjects.

Photographer Aditya Arya, founder of Museo Camera, said Rai introduced Indian journalism to such photography that you were almost one with the subject.

Rai believed that the purpose of photography is "to capture the time we live in". "When you capture the essence of any situation at the right time, it is going to be the visual history of tomorrow. History is written and rewritten but visual history can't be re-written," he said.

### Varanasi fascinated him

From the quiet rituals of cremations to the spiritual vibrations of the Ganga aarti, from the busy city streets with hurried movements to intense discussions at tea stalls, Rai's lens caught the holy city in its element, filled with raw and unmatched energy.

He saw a Banaras that was "less aware of its own image, a place that hadn't yet learned to pose for the lens", said photographer Samar Jodha, who felt like "a son and a friend" of Rai.

During his long and illustrious career, Rai worked with leading Indian magazines Sunday and India Today. Over the years, his photo essays appeared in renowned international publications, including Time, Life, The New York Times, The Independent, and The New Yorker.

He served three times on the jury of the World Press Photo and twice on the jury of UNESCO's International Photo Contest, according to Magnum Photos, where he was nominated to join by Cartier-Bresson in 1977. Rai received the Padma Shri in 1972 for his coverage of the Bangladesh war and its aftermath, apart from several national and international awards. He received the Photographer of the Year award in the United States for his photo essay "Human Management of Wildlife in India", published in National Geographic. The French government conferred him with the Officier des Arts et des Lettres in 2009.

Tributes poured in from across political and creative fields. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi credited Rai for preserving "our nation's memory" and chronicling "the soul of India – its people, its struggles, its joys, and its defining moments" in a post on X.

Shashi Tharoor shared on X that his memories of Rai stretch back to his childhood, as his father and the photographer were colleagues at The Statesman. "For me, he wasn't just a global name; he was the man with the gentle smile and the observant eye who inspired my father's generation of journalists...," Tharoor said, adding that his contribution to visual history is unparalleled.

BJD president Naveen Patnaik said his frames were not just pictures, but living histories. Rai's last rites were performed at Lodhi Crematorium at 4 pm on Sunday.

# EDUCATION CORNER

## Classifieds

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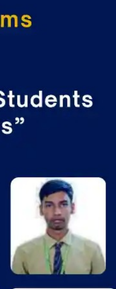
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❖ B.Sc. PMCs (Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science)
❖ B.Sc. CZMb (Chemistry, Zoology, Microbiology)
❖ B.Sc. CBBt (Chemistry, Botany, Biotechnology)
❖ B.Sc. Clinical Nutrition & Dietetics
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Centre brought armoured vehicles for Bengal polls but failed to prevent Pahalgam attack
Political Theatre
In West Bengal today, it is not democracy but TMC's reign of terror that prevails



## Meet the leader

**Kunal Ghosh**
Trinamool Congress
Beleghata

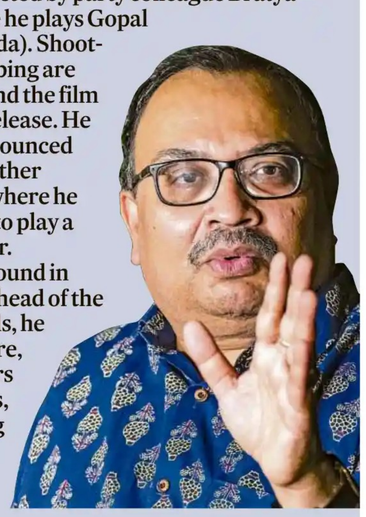
Few in West Bengal politics have reinvented themselves as often, or as visibly and audibly, as Kunal Ghosh. A former journalist known for sharp, data-driven, combative commentary, he entered the Trinamool Congress during its rise and was sent to the Rajya Sabha in 2012 by party supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

His career has rarely followed a straight line. Arrested in 2013 in connection with the Saradha chit fund scam, Ghosh spent years in jail and, for a period, turned against his own party, writing pointed letters that put sections of the TMC leadership on the defensive. The fallout led to his suspension.

His comeback was equally striking. After his release, he was gradually brought back into the party fold and eventually re-emerged as one of its most visible and vocal spokespersons.

Now contesting from Beleghata in Kolkata in the 2026 Assembly elections, Ghosh cuts a distinct figure: check half-shirt, formal trousers, watch on the left wrist, phone rarely silent. He moves easily from policy detail to punchline, writes at length, and, time permitting, switches from politics to football or a quick game of gully cricket.

He has also taken a cinematic turn. After appearing in Korpur, Ghosh is set to feature in Shekor, directed by party colleague Bratya Basu, where he plays Gopal Ghosh (Mejda). Shooting and dubbing are complete, and the film is nearing release. He has also announced a role in another film, Faad, where he is expected to play a police officer.



On the ground in Beleghata ahead of the April 29 polls, he is everywhere, walls, posters and banners, all signalling a campaign in full throttle.

**Trivia**

During the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, an exclusive channel of Arasu Cable TV, a Tamil Nadu government-owned entity, was taken over by the Chief Electoral Officer, and video messages on ethical voting were repeatedly broadcast. It was a first-of-its-kind initiative, in which a television channel was placed exclusively at the disposal of the state election machinery to promote greater participation and strengthen democracy through ethical voting.

# Poll promises mean little as relief eludes tiger widows of Sundarbans

### Families in Gosaba village recount deadly attacks, with dozens left behind in hardship; ex gratia has been trickling in, and only after HC ruling

FROM THE GROUND

**KALYAN RAY**
AMLAMETHI (GOSABA), DHNS

Banita Mandal

Rita Mandal

Vidhyadhari river in Sundarban. DH PHOTO

Kalyan Ray Amlamethi (Gosaba), DHNS: Rita Mandal spent 72 anxious hours, hoping against hope, that her husband Srinath would return from the fishing trip to the Sundarbans.

Srinath and a few others had gone into the Pirkhali forest to catch fish and prawns when a tiger killed him. No body parts were recovered. His companions returned with torn pieces of bloodied cloth and a harrowing tale.

Rita's story is not an isolated one. Jamuna Mandal went to the jungle with her sister and husband Kalipada. The trio was catching crabs and fish when a tiger attacked Kalipada. As the tiger vanished into the jungle, the two women fled for their lives.

Such stories abound in this village in Gosaba across the fearsome Bidyadhari river. As many as 80 families here have lost someone to the Royal Bengal tiger.

At the mercy of the elements most of the time, they struggle to make ends meet.

The Amlamethi village across the Pirkhali forest within the Sundarban tiger reserve is not the only such village. One can find several of them in the Kultali, Patharpratima, and Basanti blocks.

Because many tiger attacks occur in restricted core areas, where fishing and honey collection are illegal, official records reflect only a few deaths per year. Local NGOs and unions report far more, with some estimating 3,000-4,000 tiger widows across the delta.

The world's largest mangrove delta spans across India and Bangladesh. The Indian Sundarbans has a core area of 1,700 sq km, whereas the buffer zone is 885 sq km. The official permit—a boat licence certificate — is issued only to a few hundred fishermen and honey-collectors.

Thus, many are forced to go to the creeks adjoining the tiger territory, often without any permit. Thus, if they get killed, their families don't get any compensation or other benefits.

"I didn't get any money because my husband went to the core area. Now I go to Andhra Pradesh and Kolkata for work," said Rita in her mud hut.

"Having lost their earning husbands, widowed women lead a miserable life with their children," Amal Nayek, a retired school teacher who runs the Champa Mahila Society, told *DH*.

In January 2024, the Calcutta High Court ruled that the families of tiger-attack victims in the Sundarbans couldn't be denied compensation even if the victims entered restricted core areas illegally. Since then, a handful have received an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh each, with many others struggling with the paperwork.

Unfortunately, these are not among the election issues in the Gosaba Assembly constituency, which the Trinamool Congress won in 2016 and 2021 with more than 50% of the vote share.

The story is the same in other Assembly segments in the Sundarbans, such as Basanti, Patharpratima, Kakdwip, Sagar, Canning Paschim, and Canning Purba.

The CPM won Kultali in 2016, but the AITC snatched it back in 2021. This time, there is a BJP undercurrent in all these segments.

"But our lives won't change. The promises before the polls barely mean anything to us," noted Banita Mandal, another tiger widow.

# Modi, Shah seek to calm Matua anger after roll row

### PM makes CAA promise to Dalit community at Bengal rally

**ANIRBAN BHAUMIK**
KOLKATA, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers prayers at 'Thanthania Kalibari' amid the ongoing West Bengal Assembly elections, in Kolkata. PTI

**DELETIONS**

- TMC, BJP clash over Matua roll purge
- Modi visits Thakur Nagar, makes CAA promise
- Shah blames Mamata govt for voter deletions
- Matua community accounts for 17% of Bengal's population

With the campaign for the Assembly elections in West Bengal nearing its end, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday sought to contain the simmering anger among the Matuas — a Dalit Hindu community — against the BJP over disenfranchisement caused by the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

Tens of thousands of Matuas have been struck off the rolls since the start of the exercise. The ruling Trinamool Congress has accused the Election Commission of holding the revision to give the BJP an advantage in poll-bound states.

Modi visited Thakur Nagar, the nerve centre of the Hindu Matuas, before addressing an election rally and assuring the community that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), enacted by his government in 2019, would protect their rights. Shah blamed the Mamata Banerjee government for deleting Matuas from the electoral roll.

"I promise the brothers and sisters of the Matua and Namasudra community members that they will receive citizenship through the CAA. They will be provided with the same documents that other citizens of this country have," said the PM, adding, "Don't fall for the TMC's lies. All refugees will receive permanent addresses in this country."

WEST BENGAL
Assembly Poll

The Matuas are a religious sect that emerged from a reformist movement in the early 19th century, comprising lower-caste Hindus who were then treated as untouchables by upper-caste Hindus in undivided Bengal.

Their numbers in West Bengal grew significantly as many migrated from erstwhile East Pakistan after Partition in 1947 and from Bangladesh after its formation in 1971. Today, the community accounts for nearly 17% of West Bengal's population and can sway poll results in about 40-45 of the state's 294 constituencies, including Bagda, Bangaon Uttar, Bangaon Dakshin, Gaighata, Swarupnagar and Habra.

Most constituencies with a sizeable Matua population will go to the polls on Wednesday.

On Sunday, the PM paid obeisance to the sect's founder, Harichand Thakur, after reaching Thakur Nagar. He recalled his 2021 visit to Bangladesh, where he had offered prayers at the Matua shrine in Orakandi. He also remembered meeting the community's late matriarch, Boro Ma Bina Pani Devi, at Thakur Nagar in West Bengal ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

With many Matuas being struck off the electoral rolls in the BJP's strongholds, the TMC has sought to reap the political dividends of the community's anger against the BJP.

# EC announces tight security in 142 Bengal constituencies

**KOLKATA, PTI:** The Election Commission on Sunday announced a stringent security plan for the second phase of the West Bengal Assembly polls, making it clear that any attempt to disrupt voting or obstruct electors would be dealt with firmly, an official said.

The EC directed security personnel to carry out constituency-wise deployment and step up area domination exercises in interior lanes and sensitive neighbourhoods to ensure that voters can exercise their franchise without fear.

During a high-level coordination meeting, attended by poll officials, senior police officers and commanders of central forces from three election districts under Kolkata, the EC reviewed the preparedness in 142 constituencies that would go to polls on April 29.

"As part of the plan, 160 motorcycles carrying two CAPF personnel each will patrol localities across the constituencies for quick deployment. The focus is on force deployment, vulnerability mapping, communication between the civil and police administration and ensuring a visible security presence in every area," the official said.

The meeting was also attended by the Commissioner of Kolkata Police, District Election Officers of Kolkata Uttar, Kolkata Dakshin and South 24 Parganas, returning officers, general and police observers, special observer Subrata Gupta and special police observer.

Meanwhile, state Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal, who visited Kakdwip in South 24 Parganas district ahead of the second phase of polling, held a meeting with representatives of political parties and urged them to encourage voters to participate freely.

"We have requested everyone to ensure peaceful voting. Bogus voting or booth capturing will not be allowed. People must be able to exercise their democratic right without fear. Anyone trying to prevent that will face action," he said.

### NIA to probe recovery of 79 crude bombs

The NIA on Sunday registered a case to probe recovery of 79 crude bombs in poll-bound West Bengal, officials said.

The move came following a directive by the Union Home Ministry in this regard, they said.

In pursuance to the home ministry's order, the anti-terror agency on Sunday registered a case, which was originally filed at Uttar Kashi police station, Kolkata on Saturday, and took up the investigation, an NIA spokesperson said.

People cast votes at a polling booth during the Gujarat local body elections, in Ahmedabad, on Sunday. PTI

Actor and Trinamool Congress MP Saayoni Ghosh greets supporters during a public meeting in support of the party's candidates, amid the ongoing West Bengal Assembly elections, at Uddharanpur, in Purba Bardhaman district, on Sunday. PTI

# Gujarat local body polls turnout under 50% in cities

**AHMEDABAD, PTI:** Voting for local body polls across Gujarat on Sunday was largely peaceful, with urban areas recording a turnout of under 50%, while voters in tribal areas braved scorching heat to vote in large numbers.

According to the State Election Commission (SEC), municipal corporations saw a tepid 48.73% turnout.

While Tapi, Navsari and Morbi civic corporations topped the turnout tally at 65.68%, 59.68% and 58.75%, respectively, Vadodara, Surat and Ahmedabad recorded 47.26, 52.83, and 45.59%, figures on SEC website showed.

Voting concluded at 6 pm, and the data shared by the SEC is provisional. It is likely to change with further updates.

While a 68-year-old woman died of cardiac arrest after casting her vote at a polling booth in Patan city, a 48-year-old gram panchayat peon on election duty collapsed and died in Anand district.

Amit Solanki, who worked as a peon at the Sansej gram panchayat office, suddenly fell unconscious at a polling booth in the same village.

### AAP candidate dies

Narendrasinh Jadeja, an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) candidate for the Jamnagar Municipal Corporation elections, died on Sunday, a day after he took ill, said officials. "AAP candidate from Ward No 3, Narendrasinh Jadeja, died due to a suspected heart attack. However, the exact cause of death will be confirmed after the post-mortem," Jamnagar Collector P B Pandya said.

Besides the BJP, Congress and AAP, candidates of the Nationalist Congress Party and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) were also in the fray, leading to multi-cornered contests in several places.

TRAIL TALK

# Fear, disputes, rhetoric: The campaign's many shades

**SHEMIN JOY**
NEW DELHI, DHNS

People wait to submit pleas before the special tribunal in Nadia. PTI

The last vote in this round of Assembly polls, held after the contentious Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, will be cast in West Bengal on Wednesday evening. A snapshot of the campaign trail reveals both troubling and promising signs.

### Citizenship fears

There may be many reasons for the record turnout this time, but one thing that contributed immensely was the SIR-induced anxiety of losing citizenship if one failed to vote. Househelps and other migrant workers streamed out of Delhi's suburbs like Gurugram, Faridabad and Noida, as they felt their citizenship was at risk. A Bengali maid in Uttar Pradesh's Noida spent around Rs 4,000 on an AC train ticket home after failing to secure an ordinary ticket.

### 27 lakh off rolls

This is the number of people in Bengal who were once registered voters but have now been struck off the rolls for what the Election Commission terms "logical discrepancy". The tribunals set up to review their cases are crawling: they have examined only about 650 cases so far, clearing just 139. Among those deleted are 65 polling and presiding officers.

### EC notices

The EC appeared less busy this time when it came to issuing notices to erring leaders. When it did act, criticism followed for ignoring other cases. A notice went to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge over his "terrorist" jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a remark he later clarified. But complaints against Modi for his nationally televised address, dubbed political, drew no response. The controversy has now escalated into a fresh Opposition notice demanding the removal of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar.

### Targeting Muslims

The minority community once again became the target of leaders like the BJP's Himanta Biswa Sarma. Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah invoked the 'infiltrator' theme several times in West Bengal and Assam. The removal notice against the CEC claimed that around 34% of the voters deleted in West Bengal were Muslims, when the community's share of the state's population is only 27%.

Himanta Biswa Sarma

### Rahul's war

Rahul Gandhi has declared war not only on the BJP but on his partners as well. In Kerala, his targets were the CPM and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan; in West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress and Mamata Banerjee. He accused them of either striking deals with the BJP or not fighting it hard enough. In Tamil Nadu, he avoided sharing a stage with DMK chief MK Stalin, whom he once described as his elder brother.

Rahul Gandhi

### Commander Shah

The BJP is using every trick to win Bengal, where its commander is Amit Shah. He even branded Kolkata a 'city of slums'. His 'ei didi' remark on Mamata also did not go down well with the Trinamool Congress, which reminded him of Modi's 'Didi, O' Didi' remark in 2021, which backfired. However, this time Modi is careful not to disturb 'Bengali pride'.

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam chief Vijay during a roadshow. PTI

### The Vijay factor

All eyes are on actor-turned-politician Vijay and how he will fare in this election. Can he break the DMK-AIADMK duopoly? Will he secure a substantial share of votes and seats? And if the performance falls short, will he stay the course in politics? The answers will begin to unfold on May 4.

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

# Record voter turnout in the shadow of exclusion

High voter turnout has become the norm in recent elections, as seen in the current round of Assembly polls across India. Earlier this month, Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry saw high voter turnout in the elections. The elections held on April 23 in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have seen still higher percentages. Tamil Nadu recorded a high 85.11% voter turnout, much higher than the 74.5% in the 2021 Assembly polls. West Bengal registered a historically high 93%, and one constituency in Cooch Behar saw an astonishing 96% turnout. The high percentages were mainly the result of the shrinking of the electorate caused by the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls undertaken by the Election Commission of India. Political and other factors may have played a role, but the usual linkage between high voter turnout and anti-incumbency sentiment cannot be invoked in these elections.

The elections in West Bengal draw special attention not only for the very high turnout but also for the circumstances surrounding the SIR exercise and the nature of the electoral contest. The SIR exercise in the state was much more rigorous than in other states. Millions of people were left disenfranchised by the controversial logical discrepancy category, which was special to the SIR process in West Bengal. The Supreme Court allowed those whose names were cleared by appellate tribunals to vote in the elections. Out of 1.4 million people who applied for clearance of their names, only 139 people were allowed to vote. Even if it is accepted that all the lakhs of people who have gone to the tribunals for clearance may not be genuine voters, it is clear how unfair and even farcical the election has turned out to be.

**The election commission has further discredited itself when lakhs of people were denied their right to vote**

The intent for exclusion of a large number of voters was built into the design and process of the SIR exercise in West Bengal. If the turnout touched very high levels, even after the exclusion of many voters, it was because of the fear and apprehension that the process created among voters. Most voters thought that their names would be deleted from the rolls if they did not record their votes this time. Apart from the voters within West Bengal who did not want to miss their voting right, those working outside the state travelled to their constituencies to vote. Democracy has gained from the voters' rush, regardless of who ultimately benefits politically. At the same time, the election commission has further discredited itself when it created the situation in which lakhs of genuine voters were denied their right to vote.

# Lessons to learn from SSLC triumph

The record-breaking performance in the SSLC examinations this year — mirroring similarly strong outcomes in the Pre-University Course results — is a moment for celebration. With an overall pass percentage of 94.1%, a dramatic jump from last year's 80.04%, Karnataka's school education system has delivered results that signal both administrative resolve and academic recovery. Yet, the backdrop to this success — a needless controversy over the third-language evaluation — also exposes a troubling streak of policy paralysis. Students appeared for the examinations amid considerable confusion triggered by a last-minute proposal to replace marks with grades for the third language. The matter soon reached the high court. A Public Interest Litigation before a division bench was dismissed with costs for relying solely on newspaper reports. However, during subsequent proceedings before a single bench, the government, in a U-turn, undertook to adhere to the existing marks-based system. The court directed the state to maintain the *status quo*. In a quick reversal of stance, however, the government filed a review petition, arguing that over 80,000 students had failed the third language — predominantly Hindi — the previous year. The court, noting that the final notification was published after the examinations had concluded, held that the rules of the game could not be changed midway and dismissed the petition. It, however, left the government at liberty to revisit its approach in the future.

**Implement reforms at the start of the academic year**

Interestingly, the eventual results rendered the controversy largely academic: the pass percentage in the third language touched an impressive 98.55%, and no grace marks were awarded. Moreover, while the reduction of pass marks from 35% to 33% had sparked concerns about diluting academic standards, only 1,532 students benefited from the decision. Beyond the legal wrangling, the results point to substantive improvements. Government institutions recorded a significant rise in pass rates, while rural schools edged out their urban counterparts. Districts such as Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Uttara Kannada led the rankings, while traditionally underperforming regions such as Yadagiri and Kalaburagi posted remarkable gains. The state's decision to mandate syllabus completion by December, followed by three months of intensive revision, personally monitored by Zilla Panchayat CEOs, appears to have paid rich dividends.

As the state marks these historic results, the government would do well to implement reforms at the start of the academic year. The results are a good example of how, when parents, teachers, students, and the government work together, great success can be achieved. The focus must now shift to sustaining these gains and directing greater attention to districts that continue to lag. Sustained success will depend not on episodic interventions, but on consistent effort.

DRAFT REPORT

# A radical reform of excise system

By linking taxation to alcohol strength, Karnataka is taking a huge step towards addressing the social cost of spirit consumption

**K P KRISHNAN**

For 60 years, Karnataka's excise system has operated on a logic that has largely remained unchanged.

It was created and nurtured in an era of manual supervision, physical controls, and a primary focus on stable revenue generation. While this framework has served our fiscal needs, the world around us—and our understanding of the social impact of alcohol—has evolved profoundly.

In the 2026 Budget speech, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah initiated a landmark reform of the state's alcohol excise taxation and regulation. The draft excise duty structure to give effect to some of the Budget speech announcements has been notified last week. This is not merely a technical adjustment of tax slabs; it is a fundamental redesign of the system from its foundations.

For the first time, a state in India is moving away from a model that prioritises revenue maximisation to one that balances public health, social responsibility, and the reduction of harm.

Over the last year, the Revenue Mobilisation Committee (RMC) constituted by the Government of Karnataka (GoK) has made a number of recommendations to improve the state's fiscal capacity and governance. The RMC's draft report on excise reforms was recently submitted to the government and has recommended sweeping and fundamental reforms to excise taxation and alcohol regulation in the state.

The primary reason for this reform is the undeniable social cost of alcohol consumption. Studies suggest that alcohol-related harm costs between 1.45% to 2.6% of GDP. In line with this national trend, and available evidence indicating that Karnataka experiences relatively higher socioeconomic burdens, at the midpoint of 2%, the social cost in Karnataka would be approximately Rs 51,000 crore annually.

These are not just abstract numbers; these are costs paid every day by Karnataka's families in the form of domestic violence; they are paid on our roads, where thousands of preventable deaths and injuries are caused by drunk driving; they are paid by our overstretched public health system, which must absorb the burden of liver disease and alcohol use disorders. Most tragically, these costs are paid by our poorest households, where scarce income is often diverted from food, education, and healthcare toward alcohol.

This should not however lead to lazy knee-jerk reactions, like imposition of prohibition. There is overwhelming evidence from Indian states and the rest of the world that prohibition does not work. In reality, the 'cure' is worse than the original disease, as it is known to institutionalise corruption, stretch limited capacity of the state enforcement machinery without eliminating the underlying problem of irresponsible drinking.

Our current tax system is, unfortunately, poorly designed to address the realities of the social costs mentioned above.

It taxes alcohol based on price and product category rather than the actual alcohol content. This creates a perverse situation where "economy" liquor—the highest-strength and most harmful segment—is under-taxed relative to the harm it causes, while premium products are over-taxed.

The Karnataka State Excise Reforms 2026 are built upon four 'First Principles':

Strength-based taxation: The harm caused by beverages is directly related to the amount of alcohol consumed. Therefore, a tax levied per litre of pure alcohol (Alcohol-in-Beverage or LAIB) ensures that every beverage is taxed in proportion to its potential for harm.

Internalising social cost: We have established a "Social Cost Benchmark"—approximately Rs 2,000 per litre of pure alcohol in the next three to four years. Our goal is to align our tax rates with this benchmark so that the price of alcohol reflects the external costs it imposes on society.

Nudging behaviour towards moderation: By taxing alcohol content, we provide a clear incentive for both producers and consumers to shift towards lower-strength beverages in keeping with global practices.

Modernising governance: We are moving away from an outdated system of "permit *raj*" and manual inspections towards digital track-and-trace technology to ensure compliance, transparency, and the elimination of illicit trade.

Recognising that such a deep structural shift cannot happen overnight, we have suggested a clear glide path:

Phase 1 (FY 2026-2027): The GoK has already begun this phase by rationalising price slabs from 16 to eight. This year, the state proposes to introduce a hybrid tax structure, combining a uniform duty linked to alcohol content with a simplified additional duty to smoothen the transition. We are conscious that the proposed reform, linked as it is with alcohol content, will perhaps lead to an increase in prices in some segments and to a drop in others. The endeavour has been to ensure that the changes are marginal.

Phase 2 (FY 2027-2028): The government will continue to calibrate rates toward the social cost benchmark while rolling out digital track-and-trace systems across the state.

Phase 3 (FY 2029-2030)): The reformed system will hopefully be fully operational, with the excise rate indexed to nominal GSDP growth to ensure the tax automatically tracks the evolving social cost of alcohol.

A key pillar of this reform is ensuring that a part of the revenue collected from these corrective taxes is used to heal the wounds caused by alcohol.

The RMC has recommended legislating a dedicated allocation of excise revenue for four critical areas: de-addiction and mental health services, road safety, domestic violence prevention, and youth education. This responsibility will be with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, which is best placed to handle this.

The RMC's draft report on excise has been placed in the public domain. We are inviting all stakeholders—public health experts, manufacturers, retailers, and, most importantly, the citizens of Karnataka—to engage with the RMC.

We do not claim to have all the answers. Reforming a 60-year-old system is a complex task that requires collective wisdom.

*(The author is a former Karnataka cadre civil servant and chairs the RMC)*

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

# When the radio called

I trudged through heavy rain to a library to look up 'audition'

**S NARENDRA PRASAD**

It was nearly 42 years ago. I was a BA student at the then-famous Government College, Mangalore (now University College, Mangaluru). The campus was vibrant in both academics and cultural activities. We had lecturers and readers who inspired us in the classrooms and beyond. Many of us took social service and theatre seriously; for some, the entire college became a stage.

Once, while I was away attending the annual camp of our National Service Scheme (NSS) unit, a letter from Akashavani Mangalore, reached my home, asking me to attend an audition to be held at Kadri. Akashavani was planning to launch *Yuvavani*, and 14 young artists from different colleges had been short-listed and called for the audition. Taking a break from the NSS camp, I trudged through heavy rain – I could never hold on to an umbrella – to the library atop Baute Gudda to look up the meaning of the word "audition" in a dictionary. I then rushed, drenched, to Akashavani station.

We were each given a paragraph in Kannada. When the light came on, we had to read those lines with appropriate intonation. I succeeded on my second attempt. After the audition, I returned to the camp. I was over the moon when a letter arrived home asking me to attend rehearsals for a short skit slated for *Yuvavani*.

I made three trips to the Akashavani station at Kadri for recording. On the day of the broadcast, my neighbourhood hummed with anticipation. Elders and youngsters alike sat in front of radios of every make – Philips, Toshiba and Murphy – at 8 pm sharp, tuned to *Yuvavani*. Sadly, few could recognise my voice on air.

The next day, I was something of a hero in my college; only a handful had reached that milestone. Friends from St Aloysius and St Agnes congratulated me. A week later, I received a cheque for Rs 100. To deposit it, I had to open a savings bank account at a branch opposite the college. Frequent rehearsals and broadcasts boosted my self-esteem; the SB account, too, saw a steady flow of deposits and withdrawals. Much of that money found its way to New Chitra – famous for screening Hollywood films – and to Krishna Bhavan, for its irresistible *bonda-sambar*.

All this came back to me on reading about the shifting of the regional news desk from Dharwad to the Bengaluru station – once a magnet for listeners because of its iconic *Pradesha Samachara*. One wonders what stalwarts like the late H K Ranganath – an alumnus of Maharaja's College, Mysuru, and a pillar of the erstwhile Akashavani, Dharwad – would have made of it or figures such as Dr M V Gopalaswamy, former principal of Maharaja's College, Mysuru, and N Kasturi, in whose veins the blood of Akashavani seemed to flow.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Ensure safe workplaces and fair pay

I refer to 'Labour tensions reveal trade-off' (Apr 26). The recent labour unrest and protests in Noida highlight the growing struggles of workers. A key issue is wages that remain low despite rising inflation. As prices of food, rent, and healthcare climb, workers find it difficult to meet even basic needs. Many labourers also face unsafe working conditions, long hours, and a lack of proper facilities. Such conditions breed frustration and a sense of neglect, often leading to protests. Despite their crucial role in industrial growth, their concerns remain unheard. Companies and authorities concerned must act responsibly by ensuring fair pay, safe workplaces, and respect for labour rights. Addressing these issues in time can reduce unrest and build a more stable and productive environment for both workers and industry.

**N Sadhasiva Reddy**, Bengaluru

## All blame, no reform

Apropos 'BJP terms govt minimum 15% sarkara, demands probe into contractors' allegations' (Apr 26), this is a classic case of the pot calling the kettle black. Both major political parties in Karnataka 'expose' alleged graft by the other while claiming to stand for clean governance. After the previous BJP government was labelled a "40% sarkara," people are now disillusioned with these orchestrated blame games. Regardless of who is in power, poor work quality and long project delays persist due to entrenched administrative apathy, rampant corruption and disregard for economic prudence. The poor quality of Bengaluru's roads and faltering solid waste management reflect a deeper rot in the city's administration. Unless structural reforms in public contracting—including time-bound payments to contractors and performance-linked contracts—are implemented, improvement is unlikely.

**Kamal Laddha**, Bengaluru

## Ethics on test

'Medical colleges told not to grant leave to students during UGNEET exam' (Apr 26) highlights a disturbing situation where authorities must prevent medical students from attending NEET — either to impersonate candidates or secure another seat to later "surrender" for a price. This reflects poorly on the morals and attitudes of budding doctors, and perhaps their mentors. It also points to a system that prioritises exams over learning.

**Ali Khwaja**, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

...The people of West Bengal have made up their minds to vote against the TMC. The BJP is going to form the government with an absolute majority. The I.N.D.I alliance has been exposed; they are against Sanatan Dharma and in favour of infiltrators. This is their only common agenda...

**Sudhanshu Trivedi**,
BJP MP in Rajya Sabha

Politics and religion work like the twin grips of a pair of pliers on a critical mass of the masses.

**Roseanne Barr**

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

# Justice in the time of algorithms

When it comes to AI, courts must be better prepared to manage risks posed by a technology that is in a perpetual state of improvement

**LEAH VERGHESE AND DONA MATHEW**

The Gujarat High Court recently published its Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy, establishing guiding principles and categorising permitted and prohibited use cases. Like the Supreme Court's White Paper on AI and the Kerala High Court's policy, these initiatives will shape how courts in India integrate AI into judicial workflows.

While the policy is commendable in its intent, it requires further elaboration to operationalise its central concern: that human judgment in judicial decision-making must remain anchored in conscience, reason, law, and constitutional values, and that these foundational aspects of justice delivery cannot be delegated to automated systems. How can courts be better prepared to manage risks from a technology that is in a perpetual state of improvement?

First, courts will need to determine which model is best suited for a particular application, weighing its benefits and establishing redlines for risk tolerance. Large Language Models (LLMs) are highly probabilistic with opaque internal reasoning. With the emergence of 'AI wrappers' built on commercial LLMs, courts are increasingly faced with the choice to select the best wrapper, diminishing their ability to audit and trace data sources and training parameters. For instance, if an LLM is not trained on Indian case law and Indian pleadings, its outputs will be inapplicable to Indian judicial contexts. They may also reflect biases embedded in the general data the model is trained on. A 2025 MIT Technology Review article found that caste bias is rampant in products like ChatGPT, a worrying finding in a country where inequality and discrimination are lived realities for many.

Further, the policy prohibits AI use for order drafting or sentencing, while permitting deployment for functions such as administration, research and support in drafting. While practical in approach, courts must note that the risks associated with each permissible application will vary depending on the tool, the type of litigant, the case stage and the type of case. The risks of using a rule-based automated scheduling system are vastly different from using LLMs to improve the language of a judgment. For example, studies show that using LLMs to improve language and tone can lead to loss of substance or meaning, which will have far-reaching consequences in judicial settings.

Data privacy is a key concern in the policy, but these considerations will change in intensity based on factors like child custody cases versus traffic violations or scrutiny at the filing stage versus pleadings. Courts must determine their comfort level in sharing sensitive documents, such as pleadings, with AI vendors. Mechanisms to assess data for representation, mitigate bias and ensure availability of digitised, error- and gap-free data to extract metadata from are critical to building reliable tools. Elsewhere, courts are developing models that aim to leverage the benefits of AI, while safeguarding against data breaches. For example, the UK judiciary's use of Microsoft Copilot is within the judiciary's secure environment, maintaining data privacy and the integrity of judicial information.

Furthermore, for courts open to AI adoption, who will decide which tools to use and ensure they function as promised? Institutional scaffolding is essential. AI committees in High Courts and the Supreme Court should be responsible for the full AI lifecycle, from use-case conceptualisation to performance monitoring. The composition of such committees should be multidisciplinary, combining the expertise of judges with technologists, data protection experts, AI ethicists, and domain experts.

Such committees should be supported by skilled technology cadre with defined career progression pathways and periodic opportunities for upskilling. Grievance redress mechanisms are also important to enable reporting and recourse in cases of rights violations. This must be supported by clear communication to litigants and lawyers about the nature of the AI tool, its purpose and stage of use, with an option to opt out.

Given the emergent nature of AI, it is essential that its users within the judiciary develop a clear understanding of the technology. Strengthening the capacity of judges and court staff is a prerequisite for adoption — covering foundational technical knowledge of AI, awareness of ethical risks and constitutional rights implications, and practical guidance on the boundaries of its use.

For the judiciary, AI integration promises efficiency and time-saving. However, AI tools are rarely plug-and-play solutions. Their performance depends on training datasets, model parameters and the humans who use them, reflecting real-world biases and limitations. As the integration of technology and the risk of harm can erode trust in the system, it is the duty of the court to maintain the tenet that justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be done.

*(Leah is Research Manager at DAKSH, and Dona is Senior Researcher at Digital Futures Lab)*

# Welfarism scores over safety for women in West Bengal

RAKHEE ROYTALUKDAR

With women voters seen as key to winning elections in West Bengal, most parties are wooing them with welfare promises framed as empowerment. Commitments on safety feature in manifestos, but, being harder to guarantee, they appear to have taken a back seat in a high-stakes campaign.

An analysis of the 2026 party manifestos reveals that welfare measures take precedence over safety. Many believe that women's safety should have been the top priority, especially in the aftermath of the 2024 rape and murder of a trainee doctor at R G Kar Medical College. The incident triggered unprecedented protests, with women leading 'Reclaim the Night' marches across the state and demanding accountability from the state government. While it reshaped public discourse on women's safety, that momentum now appears to have waned.

Following the incident, the state government launched Rattirer Sathi in August 2024, a flagship programme aimed at improving the safety of women working night shifts. Measures included CCTV coverage, restrooms with toilets, special women volunteers, a buddy system, a mobile app with an integrated panic alarm, shift regulations, and increased police patrolling. The Assembly also passed the Aparajita Woman and Child Bill, 2024, seeking amendments to central criminal laws (BNS, BNSS, and POCSO), including a provision for a mandatory death penalty for rape convicts. The Bill is yet to receive the presidential assent to become law.

The Trinamool Congress' (TMC's) manifesto highlights 'Pink Booths' and 'Shining Teams', launched in February. The booths are to be staffed exclusively by women officers at key intersections in Kolkata from evening till midnight, while the 'Shining Teams' are to monitor major roads between 8 pm and 2 am. In the run-up to the elections, these initiatives have become a focal point of the TMC campaign. The party has also pledged to expand this model across West Bengal if re-elected.

Opposition parties have, however, criticised the timing of the launch, calling five such booths in a city of millions a token measure.

The TMC continues to focus on its most popular Lakshmir Bhandar scheme, launched in 2021, which currently provides Rs 1,500 a month to women in the general category and Rs 1,700 to those from the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes category. At least 2.4 crore women are reported to have benefited. Other schemes such as Kanyashree Prakalpa and Rupashree are estimated to have supported nearly one crore girls and young women.

Political scientist Yogendra Yadav has described the rise of such welfarism as a "disturbing trend" in Indian politics, arguing that parties often use welfare schemes to compensate for their failure to provide basic security.

Political parties appear to be working on the assumption that voters, especially in rural areas, may prioritise guaranteed monthly income over legal reforms whose benefits may seem distant. Direct cash transfers offer immediate financial agency and can foster personal loyalty to political leadership and party. It is also far easier to promise Rs 1,500 a month to every woman than to ensure safety, which requires complex changes in policy, legal framework, judicial speed, and social attitudes.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, while promising safety measures such as women-only Durga Suroksha Squads, two all-women battalions in the State Reserve Police Force, self-defence training units, at least one women's police station in every block, and a women's help desk in all police stations, has also leaned heavily on welfare. Its manifesto promises Rs 3,000 per month—double that of the TMC's transfer under Lakshmir Bhandar—along with free travel for women in government buses and 33% reservation for women in all government jobs, including the police.

Criticising what he terms the "*revdi* culture", Yadav argues that manifestos often focus too much on goods such as gas cylinders, cash transfers, and free bus rides because they are easily measurable and provide immediate electoral credit.

The Congress, meanwhile, has emphasised a zero-tolerance approach to administrative negligence and a comprehensive overhaul of workplace safety for women. Its promises include state-specific safety protocols for night-shift workers, monitored rest areas, a buddy system for women, special fast-track courts in every district to hear crimes against women and the appointment of an Adhikar Maitri in every Panchayat to assist women in navigating the legal system.

The CPI(M) has centred its manifesto on institutional accountability and the dismantling of 'threat culture'. Its manifesto emphasises structural and systemic changes to ensure safety. It has promised a guarantee of Rs 26,000 per month as a minimum wage for ASHA and Anganwadi workers. Yadav says that paying women for their labour is more empowering than giving them a monthly allowance.

In a developing economy, sociologists say financial security is often seen as the first step towards safety. But many argue that cash cannot be a substitute for justice.

Ideas have been floated for how the contaminated zone could bring economic benefits to Ukraine. But for the foreseeable future, it will be an army-controlled security belt

# Forty years later, war layers another disaster on Chernobyl

ANDREW E KRAMER AND EVELINA RIABENKO

A Ferris wheel in the ghost city of Pripyat near Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. The risks of new radioactive releases still remain today, as the site is threatened by Russian strikes after it invaded the neighbour four years ago. AFP

Vines twirl through the broken windows of long-abandoned homes, where the detritus of lives interrupted by disaster are still scattered about: children's shoes, dishes, coats hanging on pegs, all covered in lichen and dust.

The ghost towns of the Chernobyl exclusion zone in northern Ukraine emptied of people after the catastrophic explosion and meltdown at the nuclear power plant there 40 years ago, on April 26, 1986. High levels of radiation mean humans may never live in them again.

But these towns served another purpose for Ukrainian soldiers who recently trained amid the ruins. The troops practiced defending the irradiated land against a repeat Russian attack, taking precautions to avoid the most radioactive areas. In February 2022, Russia's forces entered the zone on the first day of the full-scale invasion, and occupied it for five weeks.

During the exercise, soldiers crouched beside waterlogged, mould-covered walls, aiming their rifles. Others threw live grenades into homes, chipping walls already crumbling from dry rot. Their presence highlighted a reality in the Chernobyl zone: For the foreseeable future, it will be an army-controlled security belt along the border with Belarus, a Russian ally.

"Everything depends on security" in the zone today, said the commander of the battalion training in the area, who asked to be identified by only his nickname, Skif, in keeping with military protocol.

The explosion in 1986, set off by a safety test and exacerbated by design flaws, spewed fire and radioactive material into the air, in the world's worst nuclear disaster. Two workers were killed in the initial explosion, over two dozen emergency responders and cleanup workers died in the three months after from radiation exposure, and some 200,000 people are believed to have been relocated from the area.

Over the years, the radioactive towns, villages, forests and swamps have posed quandaries for authorities. The land could never be repopulated, they concluded, because of contamination from long-lingering isotopes, including plutonium.

But it could bring economic benefits. Ideas included using it as a storage area for other countries' nuclear waste, as a test site for new generations of small modular reactors, as territory for solar farms and as a destination for so-called disaster tourism.

Now, everything, other than modest solar-farm development, is on indefinite hold. Tourists, who began showing up at the site 20 years ago, are not coming back anytime soon, said Shaun Burnie, senior nuclear specialist with Greenpeace Ukraine. Chernobyl has become one disaster layered on another: war fought in a radioactive zone.

Russia's invasion in 2022 harmed efforts to contain radiation in multiple ways. Russia's forces occupied the crippled nuclear power station and used it as a staging area for attacks on Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, early in the war. Their heavy armoured vehicles stirred up small amounts of radioactive dust. Weeks later, Russian troops were defeated in the battle for Kyiv, and they withdrew from Chernobyl.

More worrisome are longer-term war risks. Scientists cannot reach wells that measure groundwater radiation, lest they step on a land mine. Also owing to mines, firefighters cannot rush to extinguish wildfires that spread radiation in smoke. Foreign scientists who studied radiation in the environment have fled.

In February 2025, Russia flew an exploding Iranian-designed Shahed drone into the gigantic steel shell that encloses an older, rickety structure built over the ruined reactor shortly after the accident. That older structure, known as the sarcophagus, is at risk of collapsing and releasing radiation.

The drone explosion punched a hole in the $2.5 billion outer shell, called the New Safe Confinement, and started a fire that burned through material needed to maintain the airtight seal. No radiation was released, but the strike set back two decades of efforts to safely isolate the worst of Chernobyl's radiation.

The attack came a day before the opening of the influential Munich Security Conference in Germany, a warning to Ukraine's Western allies that the war could spread radiation to Europe, from Chernobyl or other nuclear sites.

It is unclear how the confinement structure can be repaired. To protect workers from radiation, it had been built away from the reactor and later moved on rails into position over it. Now, repair work will have to be done in the highly radioactive zone, possibly by cycling large numbers of workers through stints that cannot exceed 11 hours per year, to comply with safety rules.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has estimated that repairs will cost $500 million and last four years. Foreign donors, including France and Britain, have so far pledged 70 million euros, or about $82 million, for urgent repairs. The Russian drone most likely cost no more than about $50,000.

Easier to repair was a nearby solar farm that was struck by shrapnel from the drone. The 18 damaged panels were replaced.

Two solar plants are operating in the Chernobyl zone, and a third is under construction despite the war. They sell electricity for the grid using high-voltage transmission lines originally built for the reactors, and they provide backup power for cooling ponds for nuclear waste.

Solar farms, which are unaffected by radiation and are largely impervious to missile and drone attacks because they are dispersed over large areas, still have a viable future in the exclusion zone, said Yevgen Variagin, CEO of Solar Chernobyl. The company opened the first solar plant there in 2018.

Otherwise, the area around Chernobyl is now primarily a military site, fortified against attacks from the north toward Kyiv and against possible Russian sabotage of the reactor or waste-storage facilities.

Tank traps, which look like X's made from steel beams, and coils of razor wire stretch out over fields in the zone. At military positions, paths are covered in nets to protect against drones.

These defences are typical for much of the front line in Ukraine. Other military preparations are peculiar to the radiation zone.

To fight in this landscape, the Ukrainian army took special precautions. It did not dig trenches or burrow bunkers into the ground, lest it expose soldiers to radiation in the soil. Instead, aboveground berms or bunkers were built into hills of fresh sand that was trucked in.

Looking like large yellow anthills, these now dot the landscape around the Chernobyl plant.

Soldiers patrol the ghost towns, where buildings are covered in moss and surrounded by mature trees, lost in a swirl of dense vegetation like ancient Mayan ruins.

In the recent exercise, soldiers with the 28th Regiment of the National Guard manoeuvred amid abandoned homes with corroded corrugated-metal roofs and broken windows.

Though devoid of people, the area must be defended against further damage, said Skif, the commander.

Compared with destruction inflicted elsewhere in Ukraine, an attack that released more radiation at Chernobyl, he said, would be "on a completely different scale."

**The New York Times**

# Heat waves demand urgent action

B K SINGH

The country is reeling under a widespread heat wave. The surge in temperatures across northern, central and eastern India suggests a broader atmospheric phenomenon rather than isolated regional events. One explanation is the 'heat dome' — a high-pressure system in which warm air is pushed downward, compressing and heating air near the ground. The trapped air mass prevents cloud formation and, combined with intense sunlight, drives temperatures to dangerous levels for consecutive days.

Urban areas worsen the impact: concrete and asphalt trap heat, raising night-time temperatures. Lack of moisture, sparse pre-monsoon showers and dry soil further intensify the heat. Hot, dry winds sweeping across north India have also suppressed cloud formation and rainfall. The rising frequency and intensity of such events point to fossil fuel-driven climate change.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has predicted that El Niño is likely to emerge between June and August, with a 61% chance of it becoming a strong 'Super El Niño'. This weather pattern, part of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, is caused by the weakening of trade winds over the tropical Pacific, allowing warm waters to shift eastwards towards South America. The result is extreme weather—droughts, floods, heat, and declining sea ice—across regions. Warmer sea surface temperatures often translate into hotter summers in parts of Africa, Europe, and India.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has endorsed NOAA's forecast, reiterating the strong link between Pacific Ocean conditions and India's June-September rainfall. A weakened monsoon could have wide-ranging consequences: lower agriculture productivity, rising inflation and slower GDP growth.

Even before El Niño sets in, large parts of north and central India are experiencing extreme heat, while pockets in the south and north-east see moisture inflows and thunderstorm—a sign of growing climate variability.

Bengaluru, once an 'air-conditioned' city, now increasingly relies on artificial cooling as temperatures rise. The IMD data indicate a 1.5 degrees Celsius increase in minimum temperature during April and May, pushing households to use air-conditioning even at night — often powered by fossil fuels, creating a vicious cycle. While Bengaluru's maximum temperature hovers around 36 degrees Celsius, the Kalyana Karnataka region faces 42-44 degrees Celsius. Coastal regions, though below 40 degrees Celsius, suffer from high humidity and dehydration, making conditions harsher.

For gig workers and farmers, working in such conditions is hazardous, increasing the risk of heatstroke. High humidity accelerates fluid and electrolyte loss, leading to lightheadedness; reduces blood circulation to vital organs; and heightens health risks.

Cities like Bengaluru, where shade trees of native species grow luxuriantly, have experienced unprecedented growth without adequate provision for replenishing their tree cover. Greater Bengaluru needs more than a hundred tree parks like Lal Bagh and Cubbon Park. The space on either side of roads in the city is either tiled or asphalted, with no scope for greenery. Even new layouts lack adequate space for planting trees. Besides, unbuilt areas covered with concrete or tiles leave no scope for rainwater to percolate and charge the underground aquifers. Water harvesting structures are mostly defunct.

Apart from large tree groves, urban water bodies should also be rejuvenated to provide respite from heat. Karnataka, in its recent Budget, has made provisions for tree parks in all districts and for planting 75,000 ha of degraded forest lands in the Kalyana Karnataka region. This Budget statement appears misplaced as the state government proposes to divert good-quality Western Ghats forests for projects like the Hubballi-Ankola rail line and Saravathi pump storage. The success rate of tree-planting initiatives in dry regions is poor, and the rate of growth is not even 1% of the rate of plantation growth in the Malnad region. Sacrificing natural forests in Malnad and focusing on afforestation in dry zones does not amount to much. Hundreds of streams and rivers originate from the Western Ghats, and the ecological services it provides to the entire peninsular India in terms of rains, flowing water and oxygen are unmeasurable.

With the ongoing heat wave likely to be followed by El Niño, the state government must closely monitor reservoir levels to manage irrigation, power and urban water supply. The IMD should continue regular forecasts. Price caps on water tankers may be needed in emergencies. Forest fire prevention must be strengthened, including, if required, the use of firefighting helicopters.

*(The writer is the former Head of Forest Force, Karnataka)*

## OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

**50 YEARS AGO: APRIL 1976**

### Govt urged to delink press

New Delhi, April 26
Several members of the Consultative Committee attached to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting today urged the Government to take necessary steps for delinking newspapers from business houses. I&B Minister Vidya Charan Shukla told the members that though the Government was interested in delinking of the press from monopoly houses, it would like to move cautiously. Mr. Shukla said that all were agreed on the need for delinking, but it was necessary to consider various alternatives.

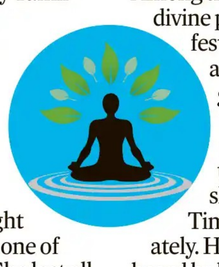
**25 YEARS AGO: APRIL 2001**

### JPC set up to probe stock scam

New Delhi, April 26
Seven weeks after the second major stock scam shook the country's financial markets on March 2, Parliament today constituted a 30- member --20 from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha--JPC probe to the "Black Friday" phenomena. Both Houses of Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution moved in this regard by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan during the day. The JPC will begin its probe immediately and is required to submit its report to Parliament by the end of the monsoon session in mid-August.

OASIS | JAMUNA RAO

# Sons of Draupadi, faith and war



With the war in West Asia and Ukraine still raging, absurdity, violence and cruelty seem a part of the civilised human psyche. In the centuries before Christ, the epic *Mahabharata* was essentially the story of a great war. It was a war which even God, Lord Krishna, could not prevent. Such was the arrogance of Duryodhana, the Kaurava prince, that he refused to give even a needlepoint of land when the Pandavas were willing to settle for five villages. The Pandavas won the war, but the destruction was devastating.

Despite the devastation it depicted, the epic did not serve as anti-war literature. On the contrary, its characters have been used to inspire warriors. The story, which was situated in the north of India, was, several centuries later, brought to the south by Tamil kings to attract soldiers for their armies. Draupadi, the daughter of King Drupada, was believed to have emerged from fire. This fiery woman did not forget or forgive the humiliation she had been subject to at the Kaurava court. She sought revenge and provoked each one of her husbands to wage war. She lost all her sons on the battlefield at Kurukshetra. Her grief further spurred her anger, and she became a force literally baying for blood.

A class of warriors was created in South India by an ode to Draupadi. Among the many celebrations of her divine power is the centuries-old festival of Karaga, which still attracts large crowds in Bengaluru. The story goes that the Pandavas and Draupadi proceeded heavenward in their mortal bodies. When she lagged behind the demon, Timirasuta behaved inappropriately. Her cries for help could not be heard by her warrior husbands. She did not despair but prayed to Shiva and Parvati. Bestowed with their strength, she created an army of young warriors, the Veerakumaras. They were her sons, and it was their duty to protect her. This legion and those who believed they were their descendants called themselves *Vannihkula*, the family of fire.

The kings patronised the retelling of these stories, as it enhanced the status of their warriors and gave them divine blessings for martyrdom. No sacrifice was too great to protect their mother in distress. In times of peace Draupadi gave them prosperity through their diverse occupations of being gardeners, carpenters and even ironmongers. They glorified her as the power that protected the Pandavas. 'As you protected the Pandavas, my mother, protect these children.'

IN BRIEF

## Doval meets UAE Prez, discusses ties

▸ **DUBAI, PTI:** National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on Sunday met UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and discussed ways to deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, along with regional developments.

The Indian Embassy in the UAE said Doval conveyed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's greetings during his official visit.

According to the embassy, both sides discussed strengthening ties and exchanged views on the regional situation and other issues of mutual interest.

## 20 B'deshis pushed back: Sarma

▸ **GUWAHATI, PTI:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said 20 foreign nationals were apprehended in the state and pushed back to Bangladesh.

"Rude people don't understand soft language... We continuously remind ourselves of this prophetic line when we expel infiltrators from Assam who don't leave themselves. For instance, these 20 illegal Bangladeshis who were PUSHED BACK last night," Sarma said in a post on X.

He, however, did not share details.

"Assam will fight, Pushbacks WILL CONTINUE," Sarma asserted.

Sribhumi, Cachar, Dhubri and South Salmara-Mankachar districts in Assam share 267.5 km of the international border with Bangladesh.

## Bengal blast: Co-conspirator held by NIA

▸ **NEW DELHI, PTI:** The National Investigation Agency on Sunday arrested a prime accused in last month's West Bengal bomb blast that left one person dead and three seriously injured.

The accused, Ahidul Islam Molla from Bijoyganj Bazar in South 24 Parganas, was held after investigators examined his role in the explosion at Dakshin Bamunia village, the agency said.

NIA investigations have revealed that Ahidul Islam was a co-conspirator in the crime, involving preparation of bombs and destruction of evidence, the statement said.

Earlier, West Bengal Police had arrested another accused in the case.

## Property of terror handler attached in J&K

▸ **JAMMU, PTI:** Jammu and Kashmir Police on Sunday attached the immovable property belonging to a terror handler in Rajouri district, an official said.

The property of Mohd Iqbal, a resident of Dara in Thanamandi area, has been attached according to the legal provisions as part of strong action against terrorism and its support network, police said.

## Man booked for filming cabin crew on flight

▸ **HYDERABAD, PTI:** A case has been registered against a 30-year-old passenger for allegedly zooming in with his phone camera to photograph female cabin crew in an "objectionable" manner on a Coimbatore–Udaipur flight, police said on Sunday.

In a complaint to the RGI Airport outpost, airline staff said the incident occurred on April 24. The passenger, a businessman allegedly intoxicated, was deboarded after landing.

Police booked him under Section 79 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (insulting the modesty of a woman).

During preliminary inquiry, he denied taking any photographs, officials said.

# BRICS meet ends in 'sharp difference' over West Asia

### UAE's position among key factors blocking joint statement at New Delhi meeting

NEW DELHI, PTI

Sharp differences among the BRICS member states over the US-Israel war on Iran stalled India's efforts to build a consensus on the conflict during a meeting of the grouping in New Delhi last week, official sources said on Sunday.

There was no change in India's position on the Palestine issue at all, they said days after the meeting of the BRICS deputy foreign ministers and special envoys on Middle East and North America.

As consensus on the West Asia conflict eluded, a "chair's statement" was released at the end of the deliberations. India is the current chair of the BRICS.

The BRICS meeting of officials on the Middle-East could not produce a consensus document because there was "sharp difference of positions among members who are party to the conflict", the sources said.

It is learnt that the United Arab Emirates' position on the conflict resulted in the meeting ending without producing a collective statement.

Efforts to bridge the gaps by all others were not successful, the sources said.

On the Palestine issue, India had only as recently as in January reached an agreed position with the Arab League, including Palestine, they said.

India has been clear in its support for a two-State solution, the sources said.

"Many BRICS members had hosted/supported/ attended the Sharm el-Sheikh summit and the UNSC resolution 2803. These have been notable developments in the last year," a source said.

The Sharm el-Sheikh summit in October last paved the way for ending the Israeli military offensive in Gaza. The summit culminated in the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement in Gaza.

Following the BRICS meeting on Friday, the Ministry of External Affairs said the members expressed deep concern on the conflict in the West Asia and offered views and assessments on the matter.

In January, India and the Arab League nations had pitched for a sovereign and viable Palestine state living side-by-side with Israel.

A declaration unveiled at the end of the second India-Arab foreign ministers' meeting said the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a "just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the Middle East in accordance to international law, relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative."

## CIC backs Russian oil import data denial under RTI

**Data on oil imports from Russia to India cannot be provided as they are exempted under the RTI Act due to their "commercial and confidential" nature, according to the PPAC under the oil ministry, with the Central Information Commission also backing it, citing strategic and economic interests of the country, reports PTI**

**The case relates to an RTI plea seeking details of crude oil imported into India from Russia between June 2022 and June 2025.**

# Heatwave tightens grip across India

### Temperatures near 45°C in several states

NEW DELHI, PTI

Northern states reeled under unrelenting heatwave conditions on Sunday, with temperatures hovering around the 45° Celsius mark in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab. However, some relief is expected from April 28 due to rain and thunderstorms from a western disturbance.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that hot weather conditions are likely to persist over the next couple of days and advised people to avoid prolonged exposure to heat.

India's peak power demand hit an all-time high of 256.11 GW on Saturday due to an intensifying heat wave, which increased the use of cooling devices such as air conditioners and desert coolers, according to the power ministry data.

The peak power demand on Saturday eclipsed the previous record of 252.07 GW, which was hit just a day earlier on Friday, April 24, at 3.48 pm.

Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 42.1° C on Sunday, 3.1° C above the seasonal average. Ridge recorded the highest maximum temperature at 43.5° C.

The weather department has issued a yellow alert for heatwave-like conditions in the city for Monday, with the maximum temperature expected to reach around 44° C.

In Uttar Pradesh, heatwave conditions were noted across several locations on Sunday, with Banda being the hottest at 46.6° C.

The intense heat also impacted Ayodhya, where officials reported a significant decline in the number of devotees visiting the Ram Temple. A senior municipal official said the temple typically receives over 1 lakh visitors daily, but that number had dropped to below 40,000 due to the heatwave.

Sizzling temperatures persisted in Haryana and Punjab on Sunday, with Narnaul and Bathinda emerging as the hottest locations. Narnaul recorded a maximum temperature of 44.2° C, while Bathinda reached 43.7° C, according to the met department.

Heatwave conditions were also seen in Rajasthan. Barmer recorded the highest temperature — 46° C — on Sunday.

**Down South**

Extreme weather conditions were also observed in the southern states. More than 10 districts in Tamil Nadu have already recorded temperatures exceeding 38°C.

Hot weather was expected to persist in the coastal areas of the state and Puducherry from April 27 to April 30 due to humid conditions and high temperatures.

The IMD on Sunday issued a yellow alert for high temperatures in several districts of Kerala for two days. According to the weather department, maximum temperatures are likely to reach around 40° C in isolated places of the Palakkad district and 39° C in the Kollam district on Sunday and Monday.

**Searing summer**

- IMD forecasts rain and thunderstorms due to a western disturbance.
- India's peak demand surged to 256.11 GW, driven by heavy use of cooling appliances
- Advisories urge avoiding sun exposure; measures include cool roofing, ORS for children, and uninterrupted power supply

Workers prepare cooling pads for air coolers amid summer heat in Prayagraj on Sunday. PTI

# Kerala on edge as snakebite risk peaks in summer

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

The snake scare in Kerala has intensified following back-to-back incidents in which seven people, including two children, have died from snakebites — the latest victims being two elderly women.

Experts point out that the risk of snakebites is particularly high during this season, as it coincides with the snakes' breeding period. Snakes also tend to be more restless during the acute summer.

Adding to the alarm are cases of children being bitten while sleeping inside their homes.

Eight-year-old Dikshil of Thiruvananthapuram suffered a snakebite while sleeping in his house.

Several small snakes of the common krait species were found in the home of eight-year-old Aljo Siljo of Thrissur, who died after being bitten while sleeping. His brother was also bitten and is under treatment.

Although a team of Kerala forest department officials carried out a search of the house on Friday, no other snakes were found. The family is now afraid to stay there.

Nafeesa, 65, of Thaliparamba in Kannur, died on Sunday after suffering a snakebite at her house on Friday night. Visalakshi, 75, of Idukki district, also died on Sunday after being bitten while working on the premises of her home.

Assistant Conservator of Forests Mohammed Anvar said that since it is the breeding season of snakes, the chances of spotting small snakes are quite high. "Even though the quantity of venom in small snakes is low, its potency is strong enough to endanger the life of an adult," he told *DH*.

The acute summer further increases the risk of snakebites, as the reptiles tend to move restlessly out of their burrows. Moreover, with schools closed for summer vacation, children are more frequently playing in open spaces, he pointed out.

Meanwhile, the Sarpa mobile app of the Kerala Forest Department has been playing a crucial role in reducing snakebite cases, with trained rescuers swiftly capturing snakes spotted in human settlements.

Around 2,000 snakes are rescued every month by the trained volunteers, whose numbers have now grown to 3,600 across the state. The department has also been conducting massive awareness programmes targeting students and those working in snake-prone conditions. While up to 150 snakebite deaths used to be reported annually in the state, the figure has dropped to around 30 in recent years. Since its launch in 2020, Sarpa rescuers have saved nearly 76,000 snakes — mostly cobras and rat snakes — from human settlements and released them back into forests.

**SEVEN DEAD**

- Snakebites claim seven lives, including two children
- Risk rises during breeding season and acute summer
- Children bitten while sleeping inside homes; families fearful
- Summer vacation increases risk as children play outdoors

## AAP petitions RS chief for disqualification of 7 members

**NEW DELHI, DHNS:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday submitted a petition to Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan seeking the disqualification of seven MPs who defected to BJP by announcing a merger.

The party's Rajya Sabha floor leader Sanjay Singh told reporters that the move by the seven MPs, including Raghav Chadha and Sandeep Pathak, amounted to defection under the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution and the anti-defection law.

The AAP petition has sought the disqualification saying the MPs were elected to the Rajya Sabha on AAP ticket but left the party to join BJP. "After consulting Constitutional experts and seeking the opinion of Kapil Sibal, I have sent a petition to the Chairman requesting that the membership of these seven members be completely terminated, as per the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution," Singh said, adding that he expected the Chairman to take a "just decision" at the earliest.

Chadha, Pathak, Ashok Mittal, Harbhajan Singh, Rajendra Gupta, Vikram Sahni and Swati Maliwal joined BJP on April 24.

Chadha and others are arguing that two-third of the Parliamentary party in the Rajya Sabha have merged with BJP and it does not attract disqualification. However, the other side argued that the Tenth Schedule is clear that the "original party" has to merge and in this case, AAP has not merged with BJP, which would mean that the seven MPs are liable to disqualification.

# BJP-ruled states plan special sessions on women's quota

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

At least four states where the BJP is in power are planning to go full throttle to further the party's campaign against the Opposition over the defeat of the Constitution Amendment Bill on delimitation linked to 33% women's quota.

Madhya Pradesh and Haryana will hold special Assembly sessions on April 27 to discuss women's quota. The Delhi Assembly session will be the next day, and a special Assembly session is scheduled in Odisha on April 30.

Andhra Pradesh, where the ruling Telugu Desam Party is a BJP ally, is also likely to hold a special session in May.

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, seeking the delimitation of Lok Sabha seats and implementing 33% women's quota on its basis, could not muster a two-thirds majority in the Lower House during a special session earlier this month.

The ruling side got 298 votes, short of 352 needed, while the Opposition managed 230.

The BJP had then announced that it would go to the streets to expose the Opposition's "anti-women" stand.

The Opposition, however, hit back saying the Bill was about delimitation but disguised as one on women's quota. It argued that the government has no political will to implement women's reservation immediately.

The Congress has been demanding the immediate implementation of women's quota in the existing strength of the Lok Sabha. The Mahila Congress has announced it will send 10 lakh postcards to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding this.

The Congress' OBC Department is embarking on a nationwide campaign for the implementation of 33% women's reservation with a focus on quota-within-quota for OBC women.

**DISCUSSIONS**

- Spl MP, Haryana Assembly sessions on April 27 on women's quota
- Delhi session next day, Odisha session on April 30, Andhra one in May

## Khera in SC against HC bail rejection

**NEW DELHI, DHNS:** Congress leader Pawan Khera has approached the Supreme Court against the Gauhati High Court's order rejecting his plea for anticipatory bail in connection with an FIR filed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, for levelling allegations related to her holding three foreign passports and a company in the United States.

His plea is likely to be mentioned on Monday for an urgent hearing.

Khera approached the apex court after the Gauhati High Court, on April 24, dismissed his plea for anticipatory bail in the case registered against him by Assam Police.

# Muted celebrations mark Thrissur Pooram after deadly blast

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS:** The celebrations of the Thrissur Pooram festival had been scaled down in view of the explosion at a firework unit in the district a few days ago that claimed around 15 lives.

Yet, thousands thronged the Thekkinkadu ground of the Vadakkunnathan temple in the heart of Kerala's Thrissur city on Sunday to witness the festival.

The spectators' excitement level was comparatively low this time in view of the fireworks unit tragedy that happened on April 21.

Elephants representing the Thiruvambady and Paramekkavu devaswoms — the key organisers of the festival — participated in the exchange of decorative parasols ("Kudamattam").

While the Kudamattam usually extends for more than an hour, this time it was limited to around 15 minutes. A percussion performance as part of the Pooram was also held.

The firework display in the early hours of Sunday was cancelled entirely in view of the tragedy.

The April 21 explosion took place at the firework-making unit of the Thiruvambady Devaswom, situated at Mundathicode in Thrissur city. As many as 18 people were killed, and many are still under treatment.

In view of the tragedy, there was a strong demand to abandon the entire Pooram celebrations. However, since all the other arrangements had been put in place, it was decided at a meeting convened by the state government to abandon the fireworks and scale down the Kudamattam celebration.

People gather on 'Paramekkavu' and 'Thiruvambadi' sections during 'Kudamattam' ritual amid the ongoing 'Thrissur Pooram' festival celebrations, on Sunday. PTI

# Maharashtra minister on a mission with water conservation message

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
LONI (AHILYANAGAR), DHNS

The next generation in India should not witness drought, said Maharashtra's Water Resources Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil, as he met people at the peak of summer with a mission to highlight the importance of water conservation while leading the landmark water pilgrimage from Godavari to Narmada.

"The idea is to make Maharashtra drought-free... we can only achieve this by involving people," 66-year-old Vikhe-Patil, an eight-time MLA from Shirdi, told *DH* on Sunday at his hometown of Loni in Rahata taluka of Ahilyanagar district.

The senior BJP leader said the 'Goda to Narmada Jal Yatra 2026' from the Jyotirlinga temple town of Trimbakeshwar in Maharashtra's Nashik to Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh is a first-of-its-kind initiative in India.

"The year 2026 marks the 300th birth anniversary of Punyashlok Ahilyabai Holkar, the legendary queen of the Maratha–Malwa kingdom, whose work in water conservation, temple restoration and women's education and welfare remains unmatched. Ahilyabai Holkar's work was across India... Maharashtra's initiative and message is pan-India," said Vikhe-Patil.

Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil

The water pilgrimage is in line with the mission of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has undertaken initiatives to ensure the state becomes drought-free, the minister informed.

"Laws cannot solve water problems in India... whatever water disputes exist must be resolved through collective wisdom," said Vikhe-Patil, who oversees the vast Krishna and Godavari river basins.

When asked about undertaking the Jal Yatra during summer, with noon temperatures exceeding 40-42°C, Vikhe-Patil said, "Only then will people realise the importance of water."

According to him, the broader idea of the Jal Yatra is to awaken people to the climate change crisis. Also, 2026 being the International Year of Women Farmers, there is a special emphasis on women's participation in water conservation.

"Not only has the Jal Yatra received a response from the BJP and its Maha Yuti allies but also from opposition MLAs," Vikhe-Patil said.

Talking about the Centre's water-linking projects, Vikhe-Patil emphasised the importance of linking rivers and creating reservoirs to store water for irrigation in drought-prone areas.

## India's wind power generation capacity exceeds 56 GW: Modi

**NEW DELHI, DHNS:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced that India had reached a significant milestone in its renewable energy journey, with its wind power generation capacity crossing 56 GW.

He hailed the achievement in his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, emphasising solar and wind energy's critical role in India's development.

"India recently achieved a major milestone in wind energy. Our wind energy generation capacity has now crossed 56 GW. In just the past year, nearly 6 GW of new capacity have been added," said the PM.

He attributed the success to Indian engineers' hard work and the country's youths' diligence.

He said these achievements were creating new opportunities, developing fresh skills, and generating jobs for young Indians.

# Assam-like NRC likely in Manipur to end conflict

## State govt to consult experts to gauge feasibility for implementing the exercise

**SUMIR KARMAKAR**
GUWAHATI, DHNS

Manipur is likely to adopt an Assam-like NRC exercise as a way to find an end to the ethnic conflict that started in May 2023.

With the Valley-based organisations stepping up the demand for updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to detect illegal migrants, Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh is planning a consultation with experts in Assam to gauge the "feasibility" for implementing the same in the strife-torn state.

"We have got in touch with a lawyer in Assam, who was part of the NRC exercise. We will invite similar experts from Assam for a discussion with people from various fields in our state on the NRC, the processes involved and to clear the doubts," Singh said after meeting leaders of Valley-based organisations.

**YUMNAM KHEMCHAND SINGH**
Manipur CM

"We will invite similar experts from Assam for a discussion with people from various fields in our state on the NRC, the processes involved and to clear the doubts

Singh said the government seeks to come up with a 'White Paper' on Assam's NRC experience and a possible way forward for implementing the same in Manipur.

The announcement came amid growing demand for an "Assam-like NRC to detect the illegal Chin Kuki" migrants from neighbouring Myanmar. The agitators have also been demanding NRC before conducting the new Census.

The Manipur Assembly in 2022, and later in 2024, passed a resolution for implementing NRC. The state had also written to the Centre for the same.

### NRC in Assam

Assam witnessed a similar demand for NRC during an agitation between 1979 and 1985 to detect illegal Bangladeshi migrants. This culminated into the Assam Accord in 1985 that decided to update the NRC.

Subsequently, March 24, 1971, was accepted as the cut-off date for detecting foreigners. But the process remained in limbo for years before a few organisations moved the SC.

The exercise was finally carried out between 2013 and 2018 following a Supreme Court order. The draft NRC rolls, released in 2018, left out 19.06 lakh applicants (out of total 3.29 crore). It was later stalled following petitions in the Supreme Court that sought reverification of the draft.

BJP did not accept the draft claiming that many post-1971 migrants fraudulently made it to the list. The Congress alleged that BJP played politics over the issue. Several groups say the CAA 2019 diluted the Assam Accord.

# 'Rats ate money': SC taken by surprise in Bihar graft case

**NEW DELHI, DHNS:** The Supreme Court has said it was taken by surprise that currency notes, allegedly seized from an accused in a corruption case lodged in Bihar, were destroyed by rodents.

It wondered how many such currency notes were destroyed as they were not kept in a safe place, terming it a "huge revenue loss" for the state.

The issue cropped up during the hearing of a plea filed by a woman who was convicted in a corruption case.

It was alleged that the woman, who was serving as a child development programme officer in 2014, had demanded and accepted a Rs 10,000 bribe from the complainant.

The top court — which earlier exempted her from surrendering till further orders — granted her bail and suspended the four-year sentence given by the Patna High Court by reversing her acquittal by the trial court.

"We have also taken notice of something which we should not ignore," it said while referring to a paragraph from the HC's February last year verdict, which had recorded that the seized currency notes were destroyed by rats and rodents due to the improper condition of the "malkhana" — the evidence storage.

In its April 24 order, the SC said, "We are taken by surprise that the currency notes were destroyed by rodents. We wonder how many such currency notes recovered ... are destroyed, as they are not kept in a safe place. It's a huge revenue loss for the state."

# Swiss plane aborts takeoff in Delhi after engine scare; 4 hurt

NEW DELHI, PTI

A Zurich-bound Swiss International Air Lines' plane carrying 245 people aborted takeoff at the Delhi airport early morning on Sunday due to an engine issue, following which a full emergency was declared, and passengers were evacuated, with four of them suffering injuries, according to the airline.

There were 232 passengers, including four infants, and 13 crew members onboard the A330-300 aircraft with registration HB-JHK that was to operate the flight LX147 when the incident took place around 1 am.

Officials said the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau would probe the incident.

"Four passengers remain in the hospital... A cabin crew member sustained a sprained ankle. The other crew members are unharmed," an airline spokesperson said in an updated statement and added that the one cabin crew member suffered a minor foot injury.

Shortly after 1 am local time on April 26, an issue occurred with one of the engines during the takeoff of flight LX147 in Delhi.

"The crew aborted the takeoff and, after assessing the situation, decided as a precaution to evacuate the aircraft," the spokesperson said.

Sources said smoke was observed from the port side of the main wheel and initially, the input was that there was smoke from one of the landing gears.

Delhi airport operator DIAL said the operations at the airport remained unaffected due to the incident involving the aircraft.

In an earlier statement, the airline spokesperson had said all passengers and crew evacuated the aircraft via the emergency slides.

The sources said initially, a call regarding full emergency and the aircraft suffering tyre burst was received from the Air Traffic Controller (ATC). After the checking was done by the airside team, it was confirmed that during the rejected takeoff, smoke was observed originating from the port side of the main wheel, they added.

# Birthday boy shoots 3 dead for smearing cake on his face in Uttar Pradesh

**SANJAY PANDEY**
LUCKNOW, DHNS

A birthday party in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district turned into a bloody clash after the birthday boy, allegedly following a dispute over smearing cake on his face, shot his three friends dead.

According to police sources here, the incident occurred late Saturday night at a gym in the town of Khurja in the district, where one Jeetu Saini had thrown a birthday party.

The deceased were identified as Manish Saini, Akash Saini, and Amardeep Saini. One of the deceased was said to be the brother of a local BJP corporator, while the other two were his nephews.

Sources said that there was an altercation between Jeetu and the victims after one of them smeared cake on his face.

A furious Jeetu left the gym and returned soon with his friends. Jeetu, who carried a gun, opened fire on the trio, who were still sitting there, said the sources.

Jeetu and his friends reportedly fled the spot after the shooting. Manish, Akash, and Amardeep sustained bullet injuries and were rushed to the hospital, where the doctors declared them dead on arrival.

The police said some people were detained in connection with the incident, and that a hunt had been launched to nab Jeetu and his friends.

A senior police official said teams had been formed to trace the culprits. The CCTV footage was also being examined, he said.

# MISCELLANY

## ◆ COMICS ◆

### Blondie

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS ARE DEMANDING EVEN MORE REST BETWEEN WORK SHIFTS!
AHA! I'VE BEEN PUSHING THAT IDEA AROUND HERE FOR YEARS!
BETWEEN SHIFTS?! YOU LOG HOURS OF REST... DURING THE SHIFT!
ANOTHER BRILLIANT IDEA SQUELCHED!
I HEARD THAT!

### Hagar The Horrible

### Beetle Bailey

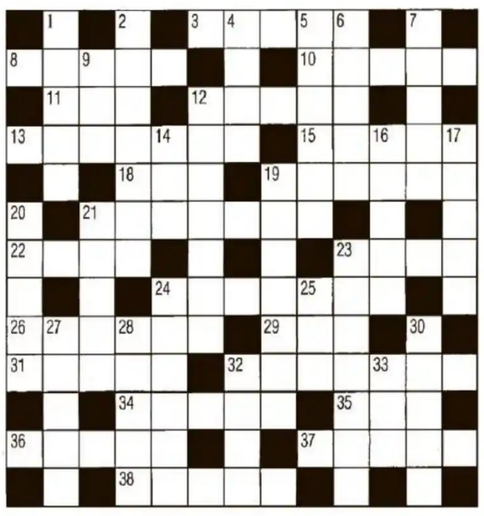
### Peanuts

I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR QUESTION, CHARLIE BROWN... WHY SHOULD I HAVE SELF-DOUBTS?
WHY NOT? AFTER ALL, YOU'RE NOT REALLY PERFECT, YOU KNOW
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE SO OFFENDED!

### Marvin

HOW WAS SPENDING THE NIGHT AT GRANDMA AND GRANDPA'S?
GREAT!
SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE
REALLY?
YEAH! USUALLY MY BEDTIME IS AT 8:00
GRANDMA AND GRANDPA FELL ASLEEP ON THE COUCH AT 7:30. I GOT TO WATCH TV FOR HOURS!

## CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12403



**CRYPTIC**

**ACROSS**
3 and 8. Classic Western drama teacher? (5,5)
8 See 3.
10 Get together with a redhead friend (5)
11 Frequently at zero feet (3)
12 It's bound to have maps in (5)
13 Land notedly said to be comparatively rocky? (7)
15 To have and to hold, say (5)
18 Mapping instrument? (3)
19 Something saucy to really enjoy (6)
21 Relating to mating (7)
22 A preference for bowls? (4)
23 In Noah's day, part of the British Empire (4)
24 Betray the unavailability of further seats? (4,3)
26 Hardly a mark on the side of the face (6)
29 Humorist who won't keep still? (3)
31 This system is astronomically energetic! (5)
32 Loads a vehicle leaves (7)
34 Be highly agreeable or equable? (5)
35 Finish up in Seven Dials (3)
36 Half a mile in a month? ñ and the rest! (5)
37 Wearers of short trousers (5)
38 Stoop to providing an incomplete design (5)

**DOWN**
1 On the street, a loud cry to increase sales? (5)
2 Does it take a month to make soup with this creature? (7)
4 A grateful goodbye (2-2)
5 The serious student is stony, it seems (6)
6 A stand for art (5)
7 A black suit (5)
9 Where to look for a backward sailor? (3)
12 Nationally famous suburb of Liverpool (7)
14 Drinkable extract of juniper (3)
16 It's on the lawful side (5)
17 Has me wrong, what a pity! (5)
19 Like Edith Nesbit's bookish children (7)
20 By getting a mug out of a hole (5)
21 The province of little men (5)
23 Imply that a gusset can be torn out with light heart! (7)
24 Undisciplined capers can lead to damage (6)
25 Pull it for progress (3)
27 Might be unfriendly, going out of turn (5)
28 Judged tea to be spilt in the road (5)
30 Roped in Peter from abroad! (5)
32 See a piece of timber to block the way (4)
33 For the road, it may well be unwise (3)

**ACROSS**
3 Gain access to (3,2)
8 Gem (5)
10 Deadly sin (5)
11 Forbid (3)
12 Hippopotamus, in short (5)
13 Of the stomach (7)
15 Arm joint (5)
18 Man's name (3)
19 Roof of the mouth (6)
21 Of the sides (7)
22 Pleasantly cold (4)
23 Lost blood (4)
24 Save (3,4)
26 Counting device (6)
29 Speak (3)
31 Flier (5)
32 Small crown (7)
34 Circular coral reef (5)
35 And not (3)
36 Scandinavian (5)
37 Not as many (5)
38 Clan (5)

**DOWN**
1 Shish or doner (5)
2 Middle (7)
4 Heroic (4)
5 Ask earnestly (6)
6 Folklore creature (5)
7 Fool (5)
9 Used to be (3)
12 Repulsive (7)
14 Decompose (3)
16 Poorly (5)
17 Unwelcome plants (5)
19 Sunshade (7)
20 Fragment (5)
21 Faithful (5)
23 Rifle attachment (7)
24 Golf item (6)
25 Fighting between nations (3)
27 Buffalo (5)
28 Freewheel (5)
30 Brimless cap (5)
32 Stout stick (4)
33 At present (3)

**SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2677**

**ACROSS:** 1 Modest, 4 Step on it, 9 Aegean, 10 Downside, 12 Dead beat, 13 Talent, 15 Rude, 16 Low profile, 19 High-handed, 20 Stem, 23 Sesame, 25 Minstrel, 27 All right, 28 Zealot, 29 Eternity, 30 Ankara.

**DOWN:** 1 Meander, 2 Dog-eat-dog, 3 Shabby, 5 Took, 6 Pentagon, 7 Naive, 8 Theatre, 11 Madonna, 14 Ophelia, 17 Inter alia, 18 Champion, 19 Hostage, 21 Militia, 22 Astern, 24 Solve, 26 Shot.

## ◆SU-DO-KU-6890◆

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5 | | 6 | | | | | 1 |
| | | 3 | | | | | 6 | |
| | | 8 | | 3 | 2 | | | 9 |
| 3 | | 5 | 8 | | 1 | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | | | 8 |
| | | | 9 | | 5 | 7 | | 4 |
| 6 | | | 2 | 5 | | 4 | | |
| | 7 | | | | | 2 | | |
| 5 | | | | | 8 | | 9 | |

hard

**SOLUTION TO 6889**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 4 |
| 8 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| 4 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| 1 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 8 |
| 7 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 5 |
| 9 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 6 | 1 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 8 | 3 |
| 5 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 7 |
| 3 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 |

**To solve the puzzle:** To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

## SCRABBLE™

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| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | 2nd Letter Triple | RACK 1 |
| L1 | K5 | E1 | L1 | S1 | Y4 | U1 | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| E1 | I1 | I1 | C3 | P3 | S1 | B3 | Triple Word Score | RACK 2 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| V4 | S1 | T1 | C3 | E1 | I1 | I1 | | RACK 3 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| T1 | E1 | T1 | N1 | I1 | E1 | B3 | Double Word Score | RACK 4 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| T1 | G2 | M3 | N1 | S1 | I1 | I1 | | RACK 5 |

PAR SCORE 95-105
by JUDD

FIVE RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 25 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

**SATURDAY'S SOLUTION**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T1 | I1 | G2 | R1 | E1 | S1 | S1 | RACK 1 = | 74 |
| M3 | A1 | C3 | H4 | E1 | T1 | E1 | RACK 2 = | 64 |
| L1 | O1 | A1 | V4 | E1 | S1 | | RACK 3 = | 9 |
| C3 | H4 | A1 | R1 | M3 | E1 | D2 | RACK 4 = | 69 |
| | | | | | | | JUDD'S TOTAL | 216 |

PAR SCORE 140-150

## JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NAYON

CAKNK

HSAMAT

RACWOD

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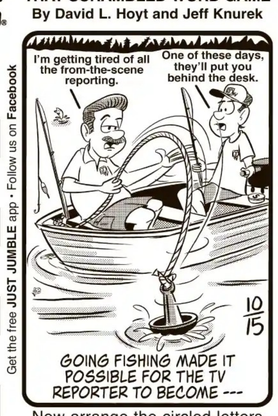
THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek


I'm getting tired of all the from-the-scene reporting.
One of these days, they'll put you behind the desk.
10/15
GOING FISHING MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE TV REPORTER TO BECOME ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: GOUGE EIGHT ISLAND GLOBAL
Answer: The base runner tried to make it to third, but unfortunatley, the shortstop — TAGGED ALONG

## HITORI-3344

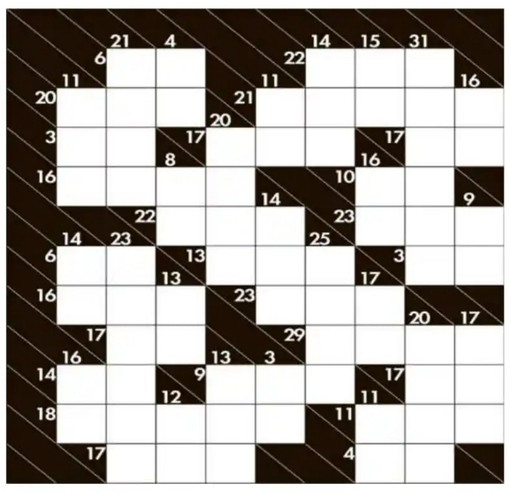
| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 7 |
| 7 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 2 |
| 1 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 8 |
| 7 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| 2 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| 7 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 7 |
| 3 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 1 | 4 |

**SOLUTION TO 3343**

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ | 3 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| 3 | 1 | ■ | 7 | ■ | 8 | ■ | 2 |
| ■ | 8 | 5 | ■ | 3 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| 7 | ■ | 2 | 8 | ■ | 6 | ■ | 3 |
| 8 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 6 | ■ | 2 | ■ |
| ■ | 2 | ■ | 6 | ■ | 3 | 7 | 5 |
| 5 | ■ | 8 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 6 | ■ |
| 6 | 7 | 3 | ■ | 5 | 2 | 1 | 8 |

**To solve the puzzle:** Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

## KAKURO- 3344



**SOLUTION TO 3343**

**To solve the puzzle:** Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

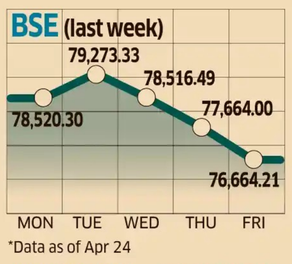
## SU DO KU X - 3898

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ | | | | 1 | | 2 | 3 | ■ |
| | ■ | | | | | | ■ | 9 |
| | | ■ | 3 | | | 1 | 8 | |
| 3 | 1 | | ■ | | 7 | | | |
| 2 | | 8 | | ■ | | | | |
| | 6 | 7 | ■ | | ■ | | | |
| | | ■ | | | 8 | ■ | | 4 |
| | 9 | | 2 | | 4 | | 5 | |
| ■ | | | 6 | 5 | | | | 8 |

**SOLUTION TO 3897**

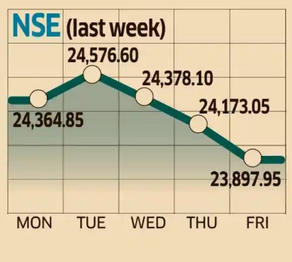
| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 9 |
| 8 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| 4 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| 6 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 3 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 4 |
| 7 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| 3 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| 9 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| 2 | 1 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 8 |

**To solve the puzzle:** The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.




*Data as of Apr 24

| TOP GAINERS | | TOP LOSERS | |
|---|---|---|---|
| TRENT | 4.76% | HCLTECH | -16.59% |
| HINDUNILVR | 3.92% | INFY | -12.45% |
| NTPC | 2.04% | TECHM | -10.04% |
| SBIN | 1.96% | TCS | -7.14% |
| ETERNAL | 1.64% | M&M | -5.04% |




| TOP GAINERS | | TOP LOSERS | |
|---|---|---|---|
| NESTLE | 10.56% | HCLTECH | -16.58% |
| DR. REDDY'S | 6.59% | INFOSYS | -12.44% |
| TATA CONS | 5.46% | SBIN | -10.25% |
| TRENT | 4.62% | TECHM | -10.12% |
| CIPLA | 4.37% | TATA CONS | -7.15% |

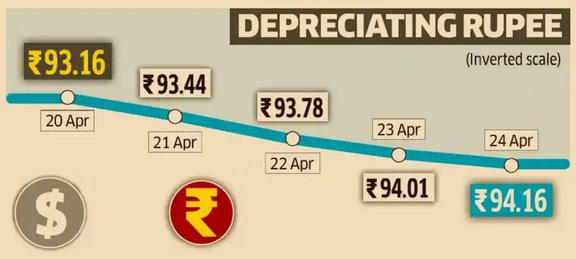
**Sensex** (52-week)

| Apr 24, 2025 | Apr 24, 2026 | |
|---|---|---|
| 79,801.43 | 76,664.21 | -3.93% |

**Nifty** (52-week)

| Apr 24, 2025 | Apr 24, 2026 | |
|---|---|---|
| 24,246.70 | 23,897.95 | -1.44% |

**10-year Bond yield** 6.93%



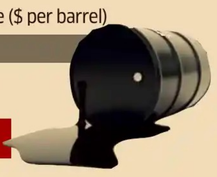

**Exchange Rates***

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dollar | ₹ 94.16 | SGD | ₹ 73.63 |
| Pound | ₹ 126.94 | Yen (100 units) | ₹ 59.02 |
| Euro | ₹ 110.13 | | |

*Price at which banks sell

**Crude Oil** Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$105.33*
0.25%
*Rate as of Apr 24



**Bengaluru fuel pump price***

(Retail)
Petrol* ₹102.92 ₹0%
Diesel* ₹90.99 ₹0%
*Rates as of Apr 26 #Rate change compared with yesterday

**Commodity watch**

COFFEE

| Category | Rate (Rs per 50 kg)* |
|---|---|
| Arabica Parchment | ₹ 22500 - 23400 |
| Arabica Cherry | ₹ 12750 - 14300 |
| Robusta Parchment | ₹ 17500 - 18000 |
| Robusta Cherry | ₹ 9300 - 10000 |

*Rates as on Apr 23

**Other Commodities**

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Bivoltine (BV) | ₹ 634 |
| Cross Breed (CB) | ₹ 548 |

*Average rates as on Apr 24

# Deal ramp-downs, repricing pressure signal tough road ahead for IT services firms

## However, AI-led initiatives see increased momentum for IT companies

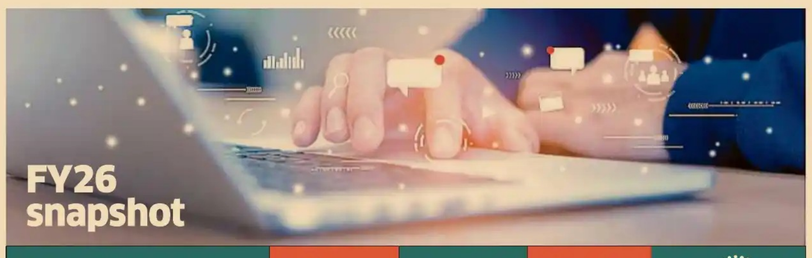
**UMA KANNAN**
BENGALURU, DHNS

In Q4 FY26, IT services firms had to deal with multiple challenges amid a tougher macro environment. Though other firms did not explicitly mention ramp-downs, HCLTech reported deal losses, signalling headwinds ahead for IT firms in FY27. Analysts said conversion delays or cancellations are a real risk and that AI deflation will aggravate in the coming year.

Infosys' guidance of 1.5-3.5% (1.25-3.25% in organic CC) in FY27 is below Motilal Oswal Financial Services' estimates at the top end. "It tells us that AI is now compressing the existing book of business. While part of this is attributable to competitive intensity and pricing in a low-demand environment, we expect the impact of deflation to continue as AI productivity benefits are passed on to clients," Motilal Oswal said.

The second-largest IT services firm, in line with peers, pointed out that telecom demand remains uncertain in FY27, as clients pare back spends and move to agentic AI across IT and BPS. "This comes on the back of a difficult couple of years for the sector, with discretionary spends still selective and decision-making slowing in pockets like manufacturing and Europe. Manufacturing faces a 75-100bp headwind from Daimler ramp-down," the brokerage firm stated.

Margins remained stable for Infosys at 21% in FY26, with benefits from currency and Project Maximus being reinvested into AI capabilities, talent, and sales.




| Metric | TCS | Infosys | HCLTech | Wipro |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Revenue FY25 ($B) | 30.179 | 19.277 | 13.840 | 10.512 |
| Revenue FY26 ($B) | 30.017 | 20.15 | 14.664 | 10.478 |
| YoY Growth (USD) | -0.50% | 4.60% | 6.00% | -0.30% |
| YoY Growth (CC) | -2.40% | 3.10% | 3.90% | -1.60% |
| Rev Guidance FY27 (CC) | No formal guidance | +1.5% to +3.5% | +1.0% to +4.0% | Q1 FY27: -2.0% to 0.0% |
| Revenue FY25 (₹ Cr) | 2,55,324 | 1,62,990 | 1,17,055 | 89,088 |
| Revenue FY26 (₹ Cr) | 2,67,021 | 1,78,650 | 1,30,144 | 92,624 |
| YoY Growth (₹) | 4.60% | 9.60% | 11.20% | 3.90% |
| Operating Margin FY26 | 25.30% | 21.00% | 17.20% | 17.20% |
| Net Margin FY26 | 19% | 16.40% | 13.80% | 14.30% |
| Deal Value FY26 ($B) | 40.7 | 14.9 | 9.3 | 16.449 |

SOURCE: UNEARTHINSIGHT

FY27 margin guidance of 20-22% factors in headwinds from wage hikes, AI productivity pass-through, and about 70bp impact from acquisitions, partly offset by efficiency initiatives, it said, estimating EBIT margins at 20.9%/21.0% for FY27E/FY28E.

It also said that repricing pressure is most visible at the bid/renewal stage.

During the company's Q4 FY26 earnings conference, Infosys CEO and MD Salil Parekh said, "As we look ahead to the financial year 2027, we see large opportunities in AI services, continued competitive intensity and AI productivity impact. With a clear AI strategic road map and real-world toolkit of Topaz Fabric, we are well-positioned to support our clients' transformation, technology and operations objectives."

The company expects acceleration in growth in Financial Services, and the Energy, Utilities, Resources, and Services verticals, and expects H1 to be stronger than H2.

CFO Jayesh Sanghrajka said the FY27 guidance includes contribution from Stratus, which the company closed last week, but excludes Versent JV and Optimum Healthcare acquisitions that are yet to be closed.

"Reduction of 0.75% to 1% was due to a lower revenue from one of our large European manufacturing clients. This was due to reduced client spend on account of the challenging macro environment, along with our conscious decision to not pursue a certain deal that was not aligned to our return expectations," he added.

HCLTech, which expects revenue growth guidance for FY27 to be between 1% and 4% YoY in CC, won total contract value (new deal wins) at $9,323 million in FY26.

The company's CEO and MD, C Vijayakumar, at the company's analyst call said they have lost some deals and that they are voluntary losses. "We have walked away from some deals which will not make sense and that would have easily contributed at least $1 billion more to this number. It's only prudent to be a little bit more careful about this and spend the energy and organisational bandwidth on more reinventing for the future and enhancing our AI positioning and delivering more value to our clients using AI, instead of really fighting some of the traditional deals where it's hyper-competitive," he said, signalling macro environment uncertainties.

For the country's largest IT services firm, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), client demand in the fourth quarter remained disciplined amid a challenging macro environment, shaped by heightened geopolitical tensions, tariff-related uncertainty, and increasingly stringent manufacturing and data-sovereignty requirements.

"Customers continued to prioritise cost rationalisation to fund a strategic pivot towards AI-led transformation, with spend focused on vendor consolidation, GCC expansion, and structural efficiency, and the resulting savings reinvested into scaling AI across core operations and product portfolios," TCS CEO K Krithivasan said.

Wipro expects revenue from its IT Services Business segment to be in the range of $2,597 million to $2,651 million. This translates to sequential guidance of (-)2.0% to 0% in constant currency terms in the first quarter of FY27. CEO and MD Srini Pallia pointed out that geopolitical and policy disruptions have become the new normal. Changing trade rules, tighter immigration policies, and prolonged conflicts continue to create uncertainties for industries and economies," he added.

### Industry to see 3-5% growth in FY27 amid AI shift

In its analysis, UnearthInsight said tech services reported 2-4% in FY26 and that FY27 offers little relief at 3-5% amid AI shift and GCC boom. It pointed out that at $8.4 billion, cumulative deal pipeline is strong, but conversion is slow.

"Industry is past the 'AI capability build' phase, but has not yet monetised it. No meaningful jump in growth, revenue/employee, or margin from AI-embedded deals or internal AI efficiencies," it said.

It also said that the top-5 IT companies will see 2-4% gradual demand recovery, but there is slow large-deal conversion.

# India, New Zealand to sign free trade agreement today

## The agreement aims to double trade between the two countries

NEW DELHI, PTI

More than four months after announcing the conclusion of negotiations on December 22 last year, India and New Zealand are set to sign their free trade agreement on April 27, aimed at doubling bilateral trade between the two countries.

The pact will give Indian companies duty-free access to the island nation's markets, and bring in $20 billion of investment over the next 15 years.

The pact will be signed in the presence of Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Todd McClay, New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment, here at Bharat Mandapam, according to the Commerce Ministry.

The deal will also give India more temporary employment visas, easier access for pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

While the agreement will eliminate or reduce tariffs on 95% of New Zealand's exports of items ranging from wool, coal, wood, wine, to avocados and blueberries to India, New Delhi made no concessions on allowing imports of dairy, onions, sugar, spices, edible oils and rubber to protect farmers and domestic industry.

New Zealand, which committed to investing $20 billion in India over the next 15 years in manufacturing, infrastructure, services, innovation and job creation, will also get quota-based tariff cuts for kiwifruit and apple exports.

The deal is aimed at doubling bilateral trade to $5 billion in five years. The pact will help Indian exporters, reeling under the impact of global uncertainties, including the West Asia crisis, diversify shipments in Oceania. India has already implemented a trade pact with Australia.

Under the pact, New Zealand will get duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal and over 95% of forestry and wood articles.

Besides, it will also get duty concessions on a number of items such as kiwifruit, wine, some seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey, and milk albumins.

To protect the interests of domestic farmers and MSMEs, India will not give any duty concessions in the politically sensitive dairy sector, like milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, and cheese.

The other products that will not be covered under the pact include vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds), sugar, artificial honey, animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, copper and its products, and aluminium and articles.

As regards the services sector, New Zealand will give a temporary employment entry visa pathway for Indian professionals in skilled occupations, with a quota of 5,000 visas annually, and a stay of up to three years.

This pathway covers Indian professions such as AYUSH practitioners, yoga instructors, Indian chefs, and music teachers, as well as high-demand sectors, including IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction, strengthening workforce mobility and services trade.

Further under the pact, New Zealand will set up a dedicated Agri-Technology Action Plan on kiwifruit, apples and honey, with a view to help Indian farmers enhance productivity and quality.

The cooperation includes the establishment of centres of excellence, improved planting material, capacity building for growers and technical support for orchard management, post-harvest practices, supply chain performance, and food safety.

**The pact will give Indian companies duty-free access to the island nation's markets, and bring in $20 billion of investment over the next 15 years.**

Commitment has been extended by New Zealand on Geographical Indications (GIs), including amendment of its law to facilitate the registration of India's wines and spirits.

Apart from tariff liberalisation, the pact includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through enhanced regulatory cooperation, and streamlined customs, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures and technical barriers to trade disciplines.

The pharma and medical devices sector of India will get a boost through faster regulatory access in New Zealand by enabling acceptance of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) and GCP (Good Clinical Practice) inspection reports from comparable regulators, including approvals by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), EU's European Medicines Agency (EMA), UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

This will reduce duplicative inspections, lower compliance costs, and expedite product approvals, thereby facilitating the growth of India's pharmaceutical and medical devices exports to New Zealand.

# AI adoption to influence salary growth within 2-3 years: TeamLease

**MUMBAI, PTI:** As organisations increasingly recognise that AI boosts productivity, employees using it are likely to gain an edge in increments over the next 2-3 years, particularly in sectors such as technology, GCCs and BFSI, TeamLease Edtech Founder and CEO Shantanu Rooj said.

Companies in India are no longer treating AI skills as optional experimentation —they are moving into the core capability stack, Rooj said.

"Recent employer and workforce studies show that 92% of Indian knowledge workers already use AI at work, and 80% of leaders in India say they would prefer a less-experienced candidate with AI skills over a more experienced one without them," he stated.

At the same time, Rooj said national industry estimates suggest India's demand for AI professionals could cross 1 million by 2026, which means companies are now thinking about AI not just as a tool, but as a workforce strategy.

"Organisations are set to increasingly move toward AI-influenced appraisal and career progression frameworks, especially in digitally intensive functions. Just to re-emphasise, recent worldwide studies already show that generative AI can affect activities that account for 60-70% of work time, with nearly 75% of the value concentration sitting in customer operations, marketing and sales, software engineering, and research and development," Rooj added.

DH INTERVIEW

# 'One in three Audi India buyers is a repeat customer'

Audi India is focusing on steady, sustainable growth as it navigates a changing luxury car market, with a noticeable shift toward younger, more experience-driven buyers. The company continues to see consistent demand across its portfolio, with SUVs driving a significant share of sales, while also strengthening its pre-owned business as an entry point for new customers, alongside its broader customer experience initiatives. Meanwhile, the German carmaker remains firm on building a future-ready brand aligned with evolving customer expectations, while adhering to its core values of performance, progressive design, and technology, Audi India Brand Director **Balbir Singh Dhillon** tells *DH*'s **Hrithik Kiran Bagade** in this interview. *Edited excerpts:*

**Please share your thoughts about Audi's performance and overall industry positioning.**
Last year, we utilised the time to strategically strengthen our foundation for sustainable growth. While we were presented with unique challenges, we saw a positive recovery in the second half of the year, supported by festive demand and the impact of GST rationalisation. Our strategy is centered on strengthening our product portfolio across segments. Alongside this, we are consistently enhancing our customer-centric initiatives, after-sales service, and digital ecosystem to deliver a holistic luxury experience, reinforcing Audi ownership as a premium journey beyond the vehicle.

Besides, customer loyalty today is among the highest we have seen, which is a very important indicator for long-term growth. One in three Audi India buyers is a repeat customer.

**Audi India launched the SQ8 recently. How many new cars/facelifts will you be launching this year?**
The Audi SQ8 strengthens our high-performance SUV line-up in India and joins the Audi Q8 family as the sweet spot between the Q8 and the RS Q8 Performance. 2026 is going to be a defining year for us. We will start bringing in new products and share more details at the right time. Our endeavour will be to grow in line with the market, if not faster.

**At present, what models/segments are you most bullish on in the Indian market?**
We have seen consistent demand across segments. Our Q range (SUVs) accounts for 60% of sales, underlining the growing importance of the segment. At the same time, our A range (sedans) continues to attract discerning customers, who value driving dynamics, comfort, and timeless design. Our RS (performance) models are also witnessing encouraging interest from enthusiasts who seek a more engaging driving experience.

**Do you wish to introduce and sell more EVs in India? What powertrains will be your key focus going forward?**
We remain committed to a balanced and future-ready powertrain strategy. We see potential in both internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and electric vehicles (EVs), and our focus is to cater to evolving customer preferences across both. Going forward, we will continue to invest in both technologies, bringing in advanced ICE products, alongside new electric offerings.

**What sales are you expecting this year? What will drive it?**
We remain cautiously optimistic about the year ahead, expecting the luxury car market in India to grow at 5-6%. At Audi, we continue to see steady demand across our portfolio. We will continue to stay agile, closely monitor external factors, and align our strategy to ensure sustainable growth in the Indian market.

**What trends, or changes do you notice in the Indian luxury car market? How is Audi responding to them?**
The Indian luxury car market is becoming increasingly young and aspirational. We are seeing a growing share of younger customers, with nearly 70% of our buyers under the age of 50. This also includes a rising base of first-generation luxury buyers who are more experience-driven and place a strong emphasis on design, performance, and technology. We are also seeing a steady increase in women buyers, which currently stands at around 11%.

At the same time, we are witnessing the entry of new buyers into the luxury car market. To address the high entry barrier, for every new car we sell, we are also selling a pre-owned car, achieving nearly a 1:1 ratio last year. Audi India is increasingly leaning on its pre-owned car business as a strategic growth driver, as it acts as a critical entry point and enables customers to transition to new car ownership.

Another important trend is the growing demand beyond traditional metro markets, driven by rising affluence, improving infrastructure, and greater exposure to luxury brands.

**Please share details about your pre-owned luxury car business.**
Audi Approved: plus, our pre-owned car business, continues to be a strong pillar of our overall strategy in India. We currently operate 27 Audi Approved: plus facilities across the country, with a robust inventory of over 500 cars, enabling us to offer customers a wide choice of certified pre-owned luxury vehicles.

The business is witnessing strong traction not just in metros, but also across Tier-2 and 3 cities, where it serves as an important bridge between the non-luxury and luxury segments.

**How many touch-points do you have in India, and in which cities?**
We currently operate with over 67 touch-points across the country. We recently strengthened our presence in Hyderabad with the inauguration of a new showroom, along with a new Audi Approved: plus and a service facility. Going forward, we will continue to expand our network strategically.

## TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

**Tata Steel**
(ID: TATASTEEL)
BUY
Upside +14%**
Last close ₹210
Target: ₹240*

**Bharat Electronics**
(ID: BEL)
BUY
Upside +17%**
Last close ₹443
Target: ₹520*

**Radico Khaitan**
(ID: RADICO)
BUY
Upside +21%**
Last close ₹3,193
Target: ₹3,850*

**Cyient DLM**
(ID: CYIENT)
BUY
Upside +26%**
Last close ₹373
Target: ₹470*

**Delhivery**
(ID: DELHIVERY)
BUY
Upside +28%**
Last close ₹447
Target: ₹570*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

# Volatility and why your portfolio feels nervous right now

Recent headlines suggest that volatility has turn into the defining feature of the economic landscape. Equity indices are fluctuating sharply, the rupee is moving within wider ranges, and commodities are reacting to geopolitical developments. Yet many investors face a quieter contradiction: their portfolios be near recent highs, while confidence remains conspicuously absent. Markets are again reminding participants prices and peace of mind do not always move together. Although widely used, the term is often misunderstood. Volatility refers to the scale and frequency of price movements, whether upward or downward, over a period of time.

The current environment is more sensitive because several forces are operating simultaneously. Monetary policy remains central to asset pricing, with changes in interest rate expectations influencing borrowing costs, bond yields, valuations and capital flows. Inflation data continues to reshape expectations regarding future action by the Reserve Bank of India. At the same time, geopolitical tensions, weather disruptions, elections and fiscal decisions are affecting trade, supply chains and business confidence. In a globally connected system where information moves instantly, even moderate developments trigger outsized reactions.

For households and business owners, the significance of volatility lies in its everyday consequences. Crude oil is the clearest example. India imports a substantial portion of its energy needs, so sustained increases in global oil might raise the national import bill and place pressure on both the current account and the rupee.

Higher energy bill also filter into daily life. Fuel is a key input for transportation, logistics, manufacturing and agriculture. As these expenditures rise, businesses often pass on part of the burden through higher prices. Air travel, freight charges, packaged goods and distribution expenses could all increase. If the rupee weakens simultaneously, imported goods and industrial inputs are now more expensive.

ANUBHAV SRIVASTAVA
PARTNER, INFINITY ALTERNATIVES

Investment portfolios respond according to the sum of its asset class. Equities might reprice as earnings expectations change. Fixed income instruments react to inflation and interest rate outlooks. Gold may attract flows during periods of uncertainty, although this relationship is not guaranteed. For many investors, the greater danger is not market movement, but emotional choices taken in response to it.

Managing volatility therefore requires structure. Asset allocation should reflect financial goals, time horizon and tolerance for risk. A sensible mix of growth assets, defensive instruments and liquidity perhaps soften the effect of sharp moves. Adequate cash reserves are equally important, as they reduce the risk of being forced to sell long term investments during temporary declines.

Regular investing has also shown to sometimes improve outcomes. Investing systematically across varying market levels reduces dependence on timing trades. Portfolio reviews should focus on quality, diversification, costs and suitability rather than short term noise. Speculation can appear attractive during unsettled phases, but durable wealth is more often built through consistency than dramatic moves.

Volatility is not a crisis in itself. It is a feature of financial markets and a reminder that risk cannot be removed, only managed intelligently. Investors who recognise this are better placed to act rationally when conditions become unsettled.

If uncertainty around your financial choices persists, seek advice from your SEBI registered advisor.

## SBI Funds to start marketing $1.5 bn IPO this Week

**BLOOMBERG:** SBI Funds Management Ltd. is set to begin formal marketing as early as next week for its planned initial public offering to raise as much as $1.5 billion (over Rs 14,000 crore), according to people familiar with the matter.

India's largest asset manager is aiming to sell about three quarters of the issue to domestic investors and is also considering raising as much as $350 million through a pre-IPO share placement, the people said, asking not to be identified as the information is private. The company is in discussions with bankers on the plan, the people said.

SBI Funds is seeking a valuation in the range $13-15 billion, the people said. That compares with rival ICICI Prudential Asset Management Co.'s market value of about $17.6 billion, following the $1.2 billion listing of India's second-largest asset manager in December.

Deliberations are ongoing and details of the offering, including size and timing, could change, the people said. A representative for SBI Funds didn't respond to requests for comment.

SBI Funds has appointed nine banks, including Kotak Mahindra Capital Co., Axis Bank Ltd., SBI Capital Markets Ltd., JM Financial Ltd. and HSBC Holdings Plc, to manage the offering, according to the draft prospectus.

SBI Funds, which oversees assets of about Rs 12.48 lakh crore ($133 billion), according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India, is jointly owned by State Bank of India Ltd. and Amundi SA. While State Bank of India plans to offload as many as 128.3 million shares, or 6.3% of the total equity capital in the IPO, Amundi will sell as many as 75.4 million shares, or 3.7%, according to the prospectus. The sale will have no fresh issuance.

## Coverage for critical care

**Critical illness insurance is not limited to cancer or heart disease**

- It usually covers over 30-60 severe conditions, depending on the insurer, including cancer of specified severity, multiple sclerosis, kidney failure, end-stage liver failure, benign brain tumour, cardiomyopathy, brain surgery, third-degree burns, and bone marrow transplants
- Policies typically cover open heart surgery and major organ transplants (heart, lung, liver, pancreas, kidney); procedures that involve very high medical bills
- It also extends protection to neurological and degenerative conditions like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, which can lead to lasting disability and ongoing care needs

# Critical illness policy: Understanding waiting periods

**This ensures that no one has to risk falling into poverty just to afford essential treatment**

AMARNATH SAXENA

Critical illness under health insurance is designed to provide financial protection against severe, life-threatening conditions that go beyond routine medical needs. Unlike standard health insurance, which covers hospitalisation and treatment bills, critical illness plans pay out a lump sum when diagnosed with covered illnesses. Battling such diseases is tough, and to further add to these difficult times, the cost of treatment for these ailments is exorbitant. According to a Lancet study, cancer is a leading driver of catastrophic health expenditure in India, with medicines making up more than 60% of out-of-pocket costs. This financial strain is compounded by the rising burden of other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and chronic respiratory conditions, which together are reshaping India's health landscape.

Moreover, India's urban working population is facing a rise in health risks from sedentary lifestyles, stress, poor sleep, pollution, and early onset of chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. Studies show that these conditions are appearing at younger ages, making critical illness (CI) cover relevant even for people in their 20s and 30s.

Therefore, choosing critical illness under health insurance can be a lifeline, helping individuals and families avoid the devastating financial strain that often comes with serious health conditions. It ensures that no one has to risk falling into poverty just to afford essential treatment. When considering such coverage, it's important to be mindful of the waiting period and the specific illnesses included, so that people can feel truly protected and prepared during critical times.

### Waiting period under critical illness

The waiting period is a fixed number of days that the customer has to wait to be eligible to submit claims for a critical illness. It is important to note that the person can get a claim only after the waiting period is over. For anyone considering critical illness coverage, the length of the waiting period can make a real difference. A shorter waiting period often means quicker access to financial support when it's needed most, so this might be one of the most-important criteria to keep in mind while choosing the right policy.

A standard critical illness policy has a waiting period of around 90 days, but this can vary from insurer to insurer. For certain riders/add-ons, the waiting period can also be zero, but the premiums for such add-ons are quite expensive.

One must not confuse the waiting period with the survival period. Survival period is the minimum number of days that the policyholder should survive after being diagnosed with a critical illness, and is much shorter in comparison. Depending on the insurance policy, the survival period is usually 0-90 days in the case of critical illness health plans.

### Coverage under critical illness

Critical insurance plans are typically benefit-only policies. This implies that it pays a lump sum amount to the customers if diagnosed with the listed ailment, regardless of the amount that they actually have to pay for the treatment. A lump sum payout can effectively replace income during long recovery periods when people cannot work. Many serious conditions like cancers, cardiac surgeries, and neurological conditions often require 3-12 months of reduced or no earnings.

Critical illness insurance is not limited to cancer or heart disease; it usually covers over 30-60 severe conditions, depending on the insurer. Some of the diseases that are covered are cancer of specified severity, multiple sclerosis, kidney failure (along with regular dialysis), end-stage liver failure, benign brain tumour, cardiomyopathy, brain surgery, third-degree burns, bone marrow transplants, and more. Policies typically cover open heart surgery and major organ transplants (heart, lung, liver, pancreas, kidney); procedures that involve very high medical expenses.

Beyond these major surgeries and transplants, critical illness insurance also extends protection to neurological and degenerative conditions like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's, which can lead to lasting disability and ongoing care needs. Coverage also extends to end-stage lung disease, end-stage liver failure, and chronic respiratory failure, which can lead to prolonged hospitalisation or organ transplants.

Ultimately, critical illness insurance acts as a financial safety net when life-threatening diseases strike. Beyond medical bills, it ensures patients can focus on recovery without the added stress of lost income or lifestyle disruptions. Understanding the waiting and survival periods, as well as the range of illnesses covered, is key to choosing the right plan.

Think of it as a two-layer shield, where one can rely on regular health insurance to take care of hospital bills, while critical illness insurance steps in to cover life-impacting costs, such as income loss or rehabilitation. Together, they provide comprehensive protection, helping one to preserve their dignity and financial stability.

*(The writer is Chief Technical Officer — Commercial, Bajaj General Insurance Limited)*

WEEK AHEAD

# Consolidation likely as sentiment stays cautious

**Ongoing earnings outcomes and sectoral news flow driving near-term moves**

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equity markets are likely to consolidate in the week ahead, with sentiment staying cautious as investors continue to monitor developments in the West Asia conflict. The ongoing uncertainty around US-Iran negotiations, coupled with disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, is keeping crude oil prices elevated and risk appetite subdued. The lack of meaningful progress on the geopolitical front is expected to keep pressure on energy price, rupee and equity markets.

Broader markets are likely to remain active, driven by ongoing earnings outcomes and sectoral news flow driving near-term moves. Shipbuilding, power, defence, capital goods and select metal stocks are expected to be in focus, supported by robust order books, grid expansion, summer power demand and continued infrastructure execution.

Globally, this week will be heavy on macro events, with interest rate decisions due from the US Federal Reserve, European Central Bank, Bank of England and Bank of Japan. Key data releases such as US GDP, Eurozone CPI, China PMI and US Manufacturing PMI will also be tracked closely. Domestically, India's fourth-quarter GDP print and currency reaction to global developments will remain important indicators. The result season also gathers pace, with earnings expected from Ultratech Cement, Coal India, Hindustan Unilever, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance and Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company this week.

Last week, the Nifty 50 declined 1.9%, with broader markets holding up relatively better—the Nifty Midcap 100 was down 0.9% and the Nifty Smallcap 100 ended nearly flat at +0.01%. Sector performance was sharply divergent. Nifty FMCG (+4.9%), Nifty Energy (+4.5%), and Nifty Media (+2.9%) outperformed on defensive and thematic buying, while Nifty IT (-10.3%) was the clear laggard, amid continued concerns over AI-led disruption to large outsourcing models and weak management commentary from HCL Technologies & Infosys.

India's defence and shipbuilding ecosystem remains a strong structural theme. The Nifty India Defence Index has surged 32% over the past year, reflecting optimism around accelerating indigenisation, record approvals and export opportunities. Indian Defence Minister's visit to Germany resulted in a Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, while discussions around the proposed $8 billion six-submarine project remain significant. Additionally, deeper engagement with South Korea across defence, semiconductors and shipbuilding adds to the long-term opportunity. Both countries also agreed on a framework that supports India's Rs 2.2 lakh crore pipeline of 400+ vessel procurements. With Strait of Hormuz-related disruptions highlighting logistics vulnerabilities, domestic shipbuilding and maritime infrastructure may continue attracting investor attention.

On the consumption side, the emerging weather setup presents a mixed picture. Skymet Weather Services projects the 2026 Southwest Monsoon at 94% of the long-period average, with El Niño conditions expected to strengthen through the second half, raising the risk of uneven crop output and tighter farm incomes. This may create near-term pressure for India's farm related sectors including fertilisers, agrochemicals, autos (2W and tractors), and rural-focused fast-moving consumer goods companies. On the positive side, elevated temperatures and prolonged heatwaves could support demand for cooling products, packaged beverages, and power backup solutions, benefiting select consumer durables and beverage companies.

*(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, MOFSL)*

## Mcap of 7 most-valued firms slumps

**NEW DELHI, PTI:** The combined market valuation of seven of the top-10 most-valued firms eroded by Rs 2 lakh crore last week, with Tata Consultancy Services and Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest laggards, in-tandem with a bearish trend in equities.

Last week, Sensex tanked 1,829.33 points, or 2.33%, and Nifty dropped 455.6 points, or 1.87%.

"Markets ended lower after two consecutive weeks of gains, weighed down by heightened geopolitical tensions and weak earnings commentary from IT majors," Ajit Mishra — SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The market valuation of TCS tumbled Rs 66,699.44 crore to Rs 8,67,364.12 crore. RIL lost Rs 50,670.34 crore from its valuation, which stood at Rs 17,96,647.50 crore.

OPPORTUNITIES GALORE

# Rossell Techsys targets 2-year leap to match 14-year growth

HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru-headquartered diversified aerospace and defence parts manufacturer Rossell Techsys is charting an ambitious growth path — aiming to achieve in the next two years what it built over 14 years. Backed by its strength in wire harnesses for global defence and aerospace platforms, the company is now exploring opportunities in newer sectors, including MRO and commercial aviation.

"To place Rossell Techsys' journey in perspective, over nearly 14 years from inception through FY2024-25, the company has generated cumulative revenues exceeding Rs 1,300 crore. Notably, Rossell Techsys is now poised to replicate this scale of revenue across just the previous and current financial years combined, highlighting the strength of its execution capabilities and the high degree of customer trust in its offerings." CEO Senthil Bala told *DH*.

The company has Rs 720 crore in confirmed orders and Rs 2,500 crore in long-term agreements, providing strong visibility for growth.

Rossell Techsys traces its origins to Rossell Tea, established in 1994 in the Northeast, with its head office in Kolkata. In 2010, Managing Director Rishab Gupta led its diversification into aerospace, resulting in the creation of Rossell Techsys.

"We were initially a division of Rossell India. We had 25 employees in Whitefield, and carried out small processes for BEL, HAL, and ISRO. That's when Boeing came looking for supplier development in India and meeting their offset requirements. They evaluated our performance and selected us to work with a platform. That's how our growth began. Gradually, Lockheed Martin, Honeywell, and other global defence and aerospace players came along," said COO Zeena Philip.

In 2020, the company moved into a 250,000-sq ft facility near Kempegowda International Airport, housing its corporate office, R&D centre, and manufacturing operations, with around 1,200 employees. By 2024, it became an independent entity — Rossell Techsys Limited.

Senthil Bala, CEO of Rossell Techsys

### Every Boeing defence platform

Today, Rossell Techsys supports all of Boeing's defence platforms and has built a core competency in electrical wiring and interconnect systems (EWIS).

"We are predominantly a wire harness manufacturer — a Tier-1 supplier to several global Fortune companies, with around 90% of our revenues coming from there. Based on the application and components, the processes are different; the customer can come — and we'll design, manufacture, test, and also find local sources for components, and then ship," Philip said.

Wire harnesses are organised assemblies of cables, wires, and connectors, critical for transmitting signals and power across aircraft, satellites, and electronic systems.

Rossell Techsys facility in Bengaluru

The company is now expanding into high-growth segments. "Last year, we looked to diversify and get into space and semiconductor. We have made close to 2,000 wire harnesses for a US-based space programme this fiscal. Owing to our quality, cost and service, we have been asked to triple that volume by the next fiscal," Bala said.

"In addition to wire harnesses, we do panel assemblies and automatic test equipment. While their contribution is currently small, those are areas we see growth — moving into electronic assemblies, box assemblies, and avionics. That's a natural progression from our competency perspective," Philip added.

Rossell Techsys is also exploring entry into India's Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) market, which is projected to grow from $1.7 billion in 2021 to $4 billion by 2031. "We are exploring foray into India's Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) market, aligned with the sector's growing demand and long-term platform support," Bala said.

In parallel, the company is also eyeing opportunities in commercial aviation, where it currently operates as a Tier-2 supplier through Honeywell.

"Over the last decade, countries have progressively increased their defence spending in response to shifting security dynamics. This is reflected in continued investments in advanced technologies, system readiness, and lifecycle capabilities across the aerospace and defence sector," Philip said, suggesting the astronomical growth expected in the aerospace and defence arena.

Today, Rossell Techsys serves 30 different customers globally, in the realms of aerospace, space tech, semiconductors, drones, industrial applications, and energy, and 80-90% of revenues are derived through exports, but it aims to expand its domestic footprint. "Going forward, the strategy is to expand our Indian presence. We have been very successful globally," concluded Bala.

**White House Correspondents' Dinner Shooting:** I fought like hell to stay, says Trump after the incident

# 'Get down!' Panic and chaos at glitzy media gala

WASHINGTON, AFP

It was meant to be a glitzy night with President Donald Trump addressing journalists at a Washington ballroom. But the glamor was shattered by gunshots that left guests diving to the floor and the US leader bundled out by security personnel.

Trump was seated on the stage at the White House Correspondents' Association's annual dinner -- the first time he attended as president -- when loud bangs disrupted the revelry and caused him and others to look up in alarm.

Moments after what sounded like gunshots, cries of "Stay down!" and "Get down!" were heard while guests in black tie and gowns -- including correspondents, officials in the Trump administration and some members of his cabinet -- took cover.

Amid the chaos, the president and First Lady Melania Trump were quickly surrounded by United States Secret Service agents, their weapons drawn.

They quickly rushed Trump off the stage and through a back curtain as the crowd crouched in shock. Trump said later he "thought it was a tray going down" before later realizing it was a gun. "It was either a tray or a bullet. I thought I was hoping it was a tray, but it wasn't."

The big band music stopped, and for a few seconds a hush fell over the guests.

Agents swarmed around tables as plates crashed to the floor of the massive ballroom of the Washington Hilton, the very hotel where President Ronald Reagan survived an assassination attempt 45 years earlier.

"Shots fired upstairs," Mehmet Oz, Trump's administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, told journalists including AFP as he was evacuated by security.

Also seen being rushed out of the ballroom was Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr -- whose father Robert F Kennedy and uncle president John F Kennedy were felled by assassins' bullets in the 1960s.

Trump later told reporters that a gunman he described as a "lone wolf" and a "whack job" had charged through security screening just outside the ballroom.

### 'Fought like hell'

The entire room was ordered evacuated, and several hundred guests made their way into the Hilton lobby and out into the chilly air.

Trump, still in black tie, appeared at the podium in the White House briefing room with Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance, FBI chief Kash Patel and other top officials.

"I fought like hell to stay" at the dinner but Secret Service agents said he had to leave, said Trump, who narrowly escaped an assassination attempt at a rally in Butler, Pennsylvania in 2024

## Attacks/Assassination Attempts On Donald Trump

**July 13, 2024**

Shooting at campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania

**Trump was shot in the ear by a gunman during a speech**

**September 15, 2024**

Attempt at golf course in West Palm Beach, Florida

**Armed suspect hiding near course; attack foiled by Secret Service**

**April 25, 2026**

Shooting incident at White House Correspondents' Dinner (Washington, D.C.)

**Gunman opened fire near event; Trump evacuated safely**

Guests take cover after loud bangs were heard during the White House Correspondents' dinner at the Washington Hilton in Washington. REUTERS

Agents draw their guns after loud bangs were heard. AFP

## King Charles' visit to US to proceed

**King Charles' state visit to the United States will go ahead as planned on Monday despite a shooting at a White House dinner attended by President Donald Trump, Buckingham Palace said after discussions with US officials. Charles and his wife, Queen Camilla, are due to arrive on Monday for a four-day state visit, but questions arose after WH Correspondents' Association dinner shooting.**

## Political violence has no place in democracy: World leaders

**WASHINGTON, PTI:** World leaders expressed relief that US President Donald Trump, First Lady Melania and other guests were unharmed after a shooting incident at the White House Correspondents' dinner here on Saturday night and asserted that political violence has no place in a democracy.

Reacting to the incident, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was relieved that President Trump, First Lady Melania and Vice President J D Vance were safe and unharmed after a security incident at the White House Correspondents' dinner in Washington.

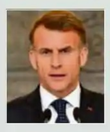
**KEIR STARMER**
British Prime Minister

"Any attack on democratic institutions or on the freedom of the press must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Modi said violence has no place in democracy and must be unequivocally condemned.

"Relieved to learn that President Trump, the First Lady and Vice President are safe and unharmed following the recent security incident at a Washington DC hotel. I extend my best wishes for their continued safety and well-being. Violence has no place in a democracy and must be unequivocally condemned," Modi said in a post on X.

**EMMANUEL MACRON**
French President



"The armed attack targeting the President of the United States last night is unacceptable. Violence has no place in a democracy. I extend my full support to Donald Trump.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who has had frequent run-ins with Trump, described the shooting incident at the Washington Hilton hotel as a "disturbing event".

Prime Minister of Japan Sanae Takaichi said, "Violence must never be tolerated anywhere in the world"

Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu called the incident "an attack on all the democracies." Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he was pleased to hear all attendees were safe.

## Key US senator lifts block on Fed chair nominee

**NEW YORK, AFP:** Republican US Senator Thom Tillis said Sunday that he would support Kevin Warsh's nomination as Federal Reserve chairman after the investigation into the current Fed chief was dropped.

Tillis had warned that he would oppose Warsh's confirmation unless a Department of Justice probe into Jerome Powell was stopped.

The move was the last major obstacle to a confirmation vote before Powell's term ends on May 15.

"The U.S. Attorney's Office criminal investigation into Chair Powell was a serious threat to the Fed's independence, and it needed to end before I could support Kevin Warsh's confirmation," the senator from North Carolina wrote on social media.

The investigation concerned Powell's handling of the renovations to the Federal Reserve headquarters in Washington.

# US-Iran peace hopes fade despite Araqchi's diplomatic push

### US delegation unlikely to return for talks soon, say Pak govt sources

ISLAMABAD/WASHINGTON, REUTERS

Hopes of reviving peace efforts in the US-Israeli war with Iran receded on Sunday as Iran's foreign minister returned to Pakistan despite the absence of US counterparts after President Donald Trump told envoys not to resume talks.

While Abbas Araqchi continued to shuttle between mediating countries over the weekend, Trump scrapped a visit to Islamabad by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

US forces removed security equipment from the city, Pakistani government sources said, signalling that any U.S. delegation was unlikely to return for negotiations soon.

Although a ceasefire has paused full-scale fighting in the conflict, which began with U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, no agreement has been reached on terms to end a war that has killed thousands, driven up oil prices, fuelled inflation and darkened the outlook for global growth.

Tehran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries a fifth of global oil shipments, while Washington has imposed a blockade of Iran's ports.

After holding talks in Pakistan, Araqchi flew to Oman - another mediator in the war - where he met the country's leader, Haitham bin Tariq al-Said, on Sunday. They discussed security in the strait and Araqchi called for a regional security framework free of outside interference, according to Iran's foreign ministry.

Araqchi later returned to Islamabad, Iranian state media reported. Pakistani government sources said he would hold talks with the country's leadership before heading to Moscow.

Speaking in Florida before being rushed out of the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington, Trump said he cancelled his envoys' visit due to too much travel and expense for what he considered an inadequate Iranian offer.

Iran "offered a lot, but not enough," Trump said.

An earlier round of talks in Islamabad - in which Vice President JD Vance led the U.S. delegation ended without agreement.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi meets Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said at Al Baraka Palace in Muscat, Oman, Sunday. REUTERS

## Iran FM departs for Moscow from Islamabad: Ministry

**TEHRAN, AFP:** Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi departed Islamabad for Moscow on Sunday, his ministry said in a statement, with Tehran's ambassador to Russia saying he would meet President Vladimir Putin.

Araghchi was on his second visit to the Pakistani capital in less than 24 hours on Sunday, having also travelled to Oman, as mediators pushed to keep peace talks with the United States alive.

There has been no second round of direct negotiations between Washington and Tehran, despite a ceasefire in the US-Israeli war with Iran beginning more than two weeks ago.

Iran's ISNA news agency quoted Tehran's ambassador Kazem Jalali as saying: "Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin during his visit to Moscow."

## Netanyahu's biggest rivals join forces for polls

JERUSALEM, AP

Two Israeli political heavyweights on Sunday said they would join forces in upcoming elections in a shared effort to unseat longtime Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid served as prime ministers in a rotation agreement as part of a coalition government they formed in 2021. They now plan to merge their parties into single faction headed by Bennett.

"The move is intended to unite the bloc, put an end to internal divisions and focus all efforts on winning the critical upcoming elections," Lapid's Yesh Atid party said in a statement.

Smoke rises from targeted areas in Choukîne, in Lebanon Nabatieh province following an airstrike, on Sunday. AFP

Bennett and Lapid scheduled a joint news conference later on Sunday.

The 2021 coalition agreement ended 12 years of Netanyahu rule. Bennett served as prime minister for the first year until their coalition fractured. Lapid then held the top job as caretaker prime minister for the final six months until new elections brought Netanyahu back to power.

Lapid has served as Israel's opposition leader since that time, while Bennett took a break from politics.

Their alliance is aimed at uniting a fragmented opposition that appears to have little in common beyond their shared hostility toward Netanyahu.

### 'Hezbollah dismantling truce'

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said Hezbollah's actions were threatening the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, as he pledged to "vigorously" target the Iran-backed group.

"It must be understood that Hezbollah's violations are, in practice, dismantling the ceasefire," Netanyahu said during a weekly cabinet meeting.

## Mali junta in crisis after minister killed, key city 'captured'

**BAMAKO, AFP:** Mali's military rulers faced a security crisis Sunday after coordinated nationwide attacks by jihadist fighters and separatist rebels this weekend killed the defence minister and reportedly left a key northern town in rebel hands.

There was no word from the junta leader General Assimi Goita, who has not been seen since the attacks began at dawn on Saturday.

The offensive, synchronised by Tuareg rebels of the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) coalition and the jihadist Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), targeted several areas in the vast arid country.

Analysts said the coordinated attacks were the most serious challenge to the country's rulers since the March 2012 offensive that was repelled by the intervention of French forces, who have since left.

Government troops were still fighting in some parts of the country, but the loss of Defence Minister Sadio Camara Saturday represented a serious blow to the administration.

Camara, his second wife and two of his grandchildren died after a car bomb attack on his home in the junta stronghold of Kati, outside Bamako, his family and an official said.

## WORLD AT A GLANCE

### Explosive device kills 19 on bus in southwestern Colombia

An explosive device killed 19 people travelling on a bus in southwestern Colombia on Saturday, an attack the country's army chief described as a "terrorist act" that also left at least 38 injured as violence linked to drug trafficking in the region escalates, reports AP from Bogota.

Octavio Guzman, the governor of the region of Cauca, said on X that the device was set off while the bus was travelling along the Panamerican Highway in the municipality of Cajibio. Five children were among the injured, Cauca Health Secretary Carolina Camargo told Noticias Caracol, a TV news program.

Gen. Hugo Lopez, commander of Colombia's Armed Forces, told a news conference that it was a "terrorist act" and blamed the network of a man known as "Ivan Mordisco" - one of Colombia's most wanted figures - and the Jaime Martínez faction.

### Russia, N Korea boost military ties

Russia and North Korea have agreed to "long-term" military cooperation, Russia's defence ministry said Sunday, as Moscow's military chief visited officials in Pyongyang, reports AFP from Seoul.

Pyongyang has sent thousands of troops -- as well as missiles and munitions -- to support Russia's war in Ukraine. In return, analysts say North Korea is receiving financial aid, military technology, food and energy from Russia, helping Pyongyang circumvent heavy international sanctions over its banned nuclear programmes. The two countries signed a military treaty in 2024, obligating both states to provide military assistance "without delay" in the event of an attack on the other.

"We agreed with the DPRK Defence Ministry to place our military cooperation on a stable, long-term footing," Moscow's Defence Minister Andrey Belousov said.

Sri Lankan monks arrive to appear before a court after their arrest for possessing 110 kilograms (242 pounds) of powerful cannabis, in Negombo on Sunday. AFP

### China launches Pak satellite

China launched a Pakistani satellite from its Taiyuan Satellite Launch Centre in north China's Shanxi Province on Saturday night, reports PTI from Beijing.

The satellite named PRSC-EO3 was lifted off at 8:15 p.m. (Beijing Time) by a Long March-6 carrier rocket and successfully entered its planned orbit, China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

This is the fourth Pakistani satellite launched by China since last year.

China launched three Pakistani satellites last year. China has been launching satellites for Pakistan in the last few years, broadening its all-weather alliance with Pakistan into the space arena. Separately, two Pakistanis who were selected by Beijing for astronaut training to participate in China's space mission training arrived on April 24.


GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
U R RAO SATELLITE CENTRE
HAL Airport Road, Vimanapura Post, Bangalore-560 017
इसरो ISRO CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE GROUP
(Phone : 080 25084168, 4175, 4169) (Fax:080 25084155)
BRIEF CORRIGENDUM-I NOTICE

1. On behalf of President of India, item rate tender is invited for the following work.

| Description | Details |
|---|---|
| Name of work | Horizontal Extension of Rendezvous Simulation Lab at ISITE Campus, URSC, Marathahalli, Bengaluru (Civil, Electrical, Airconditioning and other allied works) |
| E-Tender Notice | URSC/C&MG/C/C/12/2025-26 Dt. 16/03/2026 |
| Estimated cost put to Tender | ₹ 224.23 Lakhs |
| Period during which the tender document can be downloaded | Extended upto 17:00 Hrs. on 21.05.2026 |
| Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) | ₹ 4,48,460/- (Validity for 180 days) |

2. Interested tenderers may please refer Detailed Notice Inviting E-Tender (NIET) for eligibility criteria and other details along with Hindi version in website: www.isro.gov.in and download the tender documents from www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO

Sd/-
Group Director (Construction & Maintenance Group)


## Hindu man's body found hanging from tree in B'desh

DHAKA, PTI

A Hindu temple caretaker was found hanging from a tree three days after he went missing from his home in southeastern Bangladesh, a minority group said and demanded stern action against the perpetrators.

Nayan Sadhu, the 40-year-old resident of Dohazari area under Sthania Upazila of Chhattogram district, was serving as a caretaker-cum-priest at a Shivakali temple in Khurushkul union in Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) said late on Saturday.

Two unidentified men took Nayan with them late on the evening of April 19, and three days later, his body was found hanging from a tree in a hilly area on the outskirts of the village, according to the police and residents in the Cox's Bazar neighbourhood.

"We recovered the body when it had started getting decomposed," the Kaler Kantha newspaper said, quoting an unnamed police official.

The police are yet not sure if it was a case of murder or suicide, he said. In a statement, the council demanded stern punitive action against the perpetrators of his murder.

"The Unity Council strongly condemns the incident and demands immediate arrest and exemplary punishment against the perpetrators," the forum said in the statement.

"We just cannot understand what could be the motive of killing an ordinary caretaker of a relatively small temple in a remote area," BHBCUC senior member Kajal Debnath said.

## Amar, Daiwik headline PPC win

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Narrun Amar top-scored with 29 points while Daiwik added another 21 as PPC thrashed Hebbal 73-9 in the State Sub-junior (U-13) Basketball Championship for boys and girls for the BS Narayan Memorial Trophy at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Sunday.

LOCAL BASKETBALL

**Results: Boys:** PPC: 73 (Narrun Amar 29, Daiwik 21) bt Hebbal: 9 (Atharv 3). HT: 39-04; Bangalore Sporting: 63 (Devyansh 20, Bhavish 13) bt IBBC: 38 (Shivansh 15, Parthav 7). HT: 32-13; YNBC: 77 (Daiwik 21, Showrya 15) bt CJC: 41 (Ashith 15, Vedika 15). HT: 33-18; Koramangala: 62 (Takshin 12, Mani 10) bt DRDO: 16 (Sravan 9, Rishit 6). HT: 40-10; Young Orions: 48 (Avyukth 24) bt Devanga: 22 (Naithan 11). HT: 19-10; Appaiah BC: 24 (Nelson 12, Evan 8) bt Orions: 23 (Sourav 8, Charith 6). HT: 16-17; HBR BC: 52 (Rehaan 7, Nehal 6) bt BCYA: 16 (Rohan 6, Kushal 4). HT: 36-7; Bharath SU: 36 (Shishir 12, Hitesh 8) bt VNSC: 16 (Pranav 5). HT: 25-5; Viveks: 37 (Prerit 10, Kiyansh 9) bt YMMA: 27 (Aarav 18). HT: 18-08.
**Girls:** Lakshyan: 32 (Shivali 6, Ahaana 6) bt DRDO: 9 (Dhatri 3). HT: 10-5; Vimanapura: 25 (Barkha 15) bt MNK Rao: 18 (Manvi 11). HT: 10-10; Southern Blues: 22 (Meghna 8, Anyika 6) bt Orions: 20 (Vaishnavi 10, Anargya 8). HT: 14-6; Nettakallappa: 23 (Shreyagana 14, Mahatee 08) bt Hoskote: 13 (Jiya 9). HT: 13-7; JSC: 32 (Sanvitha 13, Adithi 12) bt Pattabhi: 4 (Kavya 02). HT: 15-04; PPC: 36 (Harshitha 12, Vedasiri 10) bt VNSC: 5 (Ridhi 03). HT: 15-01; BCYA: 61 (Sanchita 16) bt Koramangala: 8 (Sujana 4). HT: 31-04.

# Three UP athletes suspected of doping in U-20 meet

### Two minors among trio found in possession of syringes

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Three Uttar Pradesh athletes, including two minors, were suspected of doping at the National Junior Federation Competition in Tumakuru as they were found in possession of syringes on Saturday.

The three athletes, including a 19-year-old 400m runnner, were allegedly caught red handed in possession of a bag full of syringes after strong smell of medicines came from their room at a local hotel nearby the Mahatma Gandhi Stadium, the venue of the event. The images of the "evidence" and identity cards of the athletes are seen by *DH*.

The other two minor athletes competed in the 5000m and 1500m events each. None of them reached finals of their respective qualifiers.

After identifying the occupants of the room, National Anti Doping Agency (NADA) was informed of the development but the three athletes, who were also accompanied by an adult, absconded before NADA could reach.

The incident comes after World Athletics' Integrity Unit designated India as a country having "extremely high" risk of doping only last week.

World Anti-Doping Agency president Witold Banka, during her visit to Delhi recently, urged India to seriously consider the doping menace in the country. Efforts are also on by the Indian government to criminalise doping in the country as India's bid for the 2036 Olympics continue to take a hit.

A plastic bag full of syringes was allegedly found in the athletes' hotel room during the National Junior Federation Competition in Tumakuru.

"NADA's team was informed about the three athletes several hours after the incident but the athletes were not present at the hotel by the time the anti-doping officials could reach," a source told *DH*. "The adult in the group is a former athlete and, prima facie, is suspected to be influencing the kids into substance abuse. All of them have been identified but and are on NADA's radar if they show up in any future event."

The *DH* also reached out to UP Athletics Association to trace the whereabouts of the athletes but there was no response.

Meanwhile, the competition director Satyanarayan said Athletics Federation of India is looking into the matter.

It's worth noting that alleged presence of syrignes also violates the AFI's 'No Needle Policy', banning the possession and use of syringes by athletes and staff.

Violations, such as finding needles in rooms or baggage, result in immediate disqualification, suspensions up to three years. NADA may enforce a four-year ban for similar offence if linked to prohibited substances.

The three-day event, which concluded on Sunday with over 1,000 athletes taking part, served as the final trials for this year's U-20 Asian Athletics Championships in Hong Kong in May. The competition was earlier slated to be held in the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here but was moved to Tumakuru over clash with an Indian Super League match.

This wasn't the only incident of syringes being found during the competition as they were also spotted at the stadium's washrooms on Day 1 while records galore fell at the meet. This also prompted a reaction from the officials that participants will be thoroughly checked.

Nagini

## Nagini bags lone gold for Karnataka

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Middle-distance runner Nagini crossed the finish line first in the women's 800m race to win Karnataka a gold medal on the last day of the 24th National Junior U20 Federation Athletics Competition in Tumukaru on Sunday.

Nagini clocked 2:12.06 to top the podium ahead of Uttar Pradesh's Vanshika (2:13.30) and Geetika Dahiya of Haryana (2:13.49) who occupied the second and third positions respectively.

The hosts also added a few more medals in the women's section as Apurva Anand Naik (1:01.42) won silver in the 400m hurdles while Bhavya CJ (47.23m) clinched bronze in the javelin throw.

Nikhil C finished third in the men's 3000m steeplechase (9:35.25), to be the lone male athlete from Karnataka to win a medal in the three-day competition.

**Results (only winners & Karnataka athletes): Men: 200m:** Abhay Singh (Reliance) 20.82 secs.
**800m:** Mogali Venkatram (AP) 1:49.02.
**400m Hurdles:** Jashanpreet Singh (Pun) 51.80 secs.
**3000m:** Sourabh Rawat (Utk) 8:25.63.
**Triple Jump:** Royshan P (TN) 15.75m.
**High Jump:** Basant (Navy) 2.21m.
**Javelin Throw:** Rohan Yadav (NCOE Patiala) 73.37m.
**Discus Throw:** Nishchay (Har) 57.02m.
**3000m Steeplechase:** Sumit Rathee (Har) 9:28.04, 1; Nikhil C (Kar) 9:35.25, 3.
**Women: 200m:** Bhoomika Nehate (Mah) 24.21s.
**800m:** Nagini (Kar) 2:12.06.
**400m Hurdles:** Tanu Chaudhary (UP) 59.38s, 1; Apurva Anand Naik (Kar) 1:01.42, 2.
**3000m:** Sakshi Bhandari (Mah) 9:45.43.
**Triple Jump:** Sadhana Ravi (TN) 12.97m.
**Javelin Throw:** Poonam (JSW) 51.64m, 1; Bhavya CJ (Kar) 47.23m, 3.
**Hammer Throw:** Nandini (UP) 58.78m.
**3000m Steeplechase:** Mansi Yadav (Mah) 11:10.59.
**Heptathlon:** Jaskiran Kaur (Utk) 4367 points.

## IN BRIEF

### Double delight for MSRIT

▸ Ramaiah Institute of Technology won the both men's and women's basketball titles in the Ramaiah Memorial state-level inter-collegiate basketball championship in Bengaluru on Saturday, reports DHNS.
**Results: Men's final league match**: MSRIT: 62 (Adarsh 20, Kanishka 16, Pranesh 10) bt RVCE: 40 (Harshil 10, Rohan 14).
**Women's final league match**: MSRIT: 56 ( Aadhya Aital 30, Nakshatra 12) bt NMIT: 40 (Sanjana 20).
**Special prizes (MVP)**: Adarsh Alwa and Aadhya Aital.

### Al-Ahli retain AFC CL title

▸ Al-Ahli of Saudi Arabia successfully defended the AFC Champions League Elite crown after beating first-time finalist Machida Zelvia of Japan 1-0 on Saturday, reports AP from Jeddah.

It took an extra-time goal from Saudi international striker Firas Al-Burikan to settle a bad-tempered final in front of 60,000 mainly Al-Ahli fans in Jeddah.

Al-Ahli played with 10 men for almost an hour but Machida was unable to make the advantage count.

### Messi's Inter Miami post draw

▸ German Berterame scored off a rebound in the 76th minute and Inter Miami finished in a 1-1 tie with the New England Revolution on Saturday night, keeping the defending MLS Cup champions winless in three matches at their new Miami stadium, reports AP from Miami.

The Herons are 0-0-3 in the new building - compared with 5-1-1 in MLS road matches this season. Inter Miami is now unbeaten (5-0-4) in its last nine MLS matches following a season-opening loss at LAFC, and unbeaten in its last 11 matches.

## ◆ ON TV ◆

**CRICKET**
**IPL:** Delhi Capitals vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru **(7:30 pm). LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

**5th Women's T20I:** South Africa vs India **(5:30 pm). LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

**FOOTBALL**
**EPL:** Manchester United vs Brentford **(12:30 am, Tuesday). LIVE** on **Star Sports Network.**

**BADMINTON**
**Thomas & Uber Cup:** Group Stage **(12:00 pm). LIVE** on **Star Sports Select 2, JioHotstar.**

TCS WORLD 10K RUN

Rodrigue Kwizera (left) of Burundi won the men's International Elite Athletes title while Florence Niyonkuru of Rwanda claimed the women's race at the TCS World 10K run in Bengaluru on Sunday. DH PHOTOS/ PUSHKAR V

# Kwizera shatters record

### Rwanda's Niyonkuru stuns tough field to clinch women's race

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

Burundi's Rodrigue Kwizera lived up to his billing in emphatic fashion, shattering the meet record to clinch the men's elite title while Rwanda's Florence Niyonkuru stunned a stacked field to take the women's crown at the TCS World 10K here on Sunday.

The event, which also included open 10k and senior citizen category, captured the spirit of the city as over 35,000 participants showed up to try their luck at the hard distance in sweltering conditions, including many barefoot runners.

However, the elite competition had everyone's attention with Kwizera, among the pre-race favourites, clocked a blistering 27:31 to better the previous meet record of 27:38 set by Keyna's Nicholas Kipkorir.

In doing so, the 26-year-old runner also halted the momentum of Uganda's Harbert Kibet, who had arrived here in form after winning the 10K Castellon in Spain earlier this year.

Kenya's Gilbert Kipkosgei Kiprotich impressed on his 10k debut, finishing third in 27:43, as four runners dipped under the 28-minute mark despite testing conditions. The humidity and rising temperatures made for a demanding outing, forcing the elite pack to recalibrate their usual aggressive strategies.

True to the pattern often seen in international road races, the African contingent began conservatively, running in a tight group through the early stages. The first half of the race was covered in a relatively modest 14:01 for 5km before the tempo lifted sharply in the latter half, with Kwizera closing in 13:30 to break away decisively.

"I always was aiming for the meet record," Kwizera said after the race. "It wasn't easy at all as it was too humid. That's why I started slowly for the first two kilometres, but then I felt I had enough power left to push towards the end."

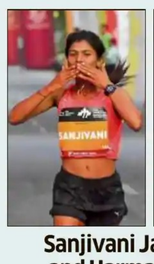
In the women's race, Niyonkuru produced a composed run to upset the favourites, finishing in 30:45 -- just 10 seconds shy of the course record. Kenya's Brenda Jepchirchir took second place in 30:59, followed by Ethiopia's Chaltu Diriba, who clocked 31:03.

It was, however, a disappointing outing for former champion Sarah Chelangat. The Ugandan endured an off day, finishing a distant 15th with a time of 32:35, the second slowest among the international runners.

The taxing conditions did take their toll on some of the athletes as Kenya's Margret Gati Chacha, who finished 14th, fainted after the race and was stretchered to hospital by the medical officials present at the venue. Further details on her health were awaited.

**Results: Foreign: Men:** Rodrigue Kwizera (Bur) 27:31s, 1; Harbert Kibet (Uga) 27.39, 2; Gilbert Kipkosgei Kiprotic (Ken) 27.43, 3.
**Women:** Florence Niyonkuru (Rwa) 30:45, 1; Brenda Jepchirchir (Ken) 30:59, 2; Chaltu Diriba (Eth) 31:03.

### Triple delight for Sanjivani, Harman springs a surprise



Sanjivani Jadhav (left) and Harmanjot Singh. DH PHOTO/ PUSHKAR V/PTI

Sanjivani Jadhav re-asserted her dominance across long-distance road events as the Maharahstra athlete won her third TCS World 10K title without much trouble, reports Aditya K Halder.

It was a suprise result in the men's event as Punjab's army runner Harmanjot Singh stunned the field to grab the top spot at 29:13 seconds while missing out on the course record by just a second.

Karnataka runner Shailesh Kushwaha finished second in the men's event as he finished eight seconds behind Harmanjot while another army runner Deepak Bhatt clocked 29.52 for a third spot.

However, the day belonged to Sanjivani, who holds the meet record since 2018 at 33:38 seconds, as she clocked 35:01 seconds in challenging conditions to not just defend her title in a one-horse race but also became the first Indian woman to win the event thrice.

**Results: India: Men:** Harmanjot Singh 29:13s, 1; Shailesh Kushwaha 29:21, 2; Deepak Bhatt 29:52.
**Women:** Sanjivani Jadhav 35:01, 1; Soniya 35:31, 2; Bhagirathi 35.32, 3.

# Marathon history: Sawe goes sub-two-hour

LONDON, AFP

Kenya's Sabastian Sawe on Sunday shattered one of the most elusive barriers in athletics, becoming the first man to dip below the two-hour mark in the marathon while Tigst Assefa **(in pic)** smashed her own women's-only world record.

Sawe, sporting state-of-the-art running shoes and spurred on by second-placed Yomif Kejelcha of Ethiopia, clocked a barely believable 1hr 59min 30sec to retain his London crown.

It shattered by 65 seconds the previous best of 2:00:35 set in Chicago in 2023 by the late Kelvin Kiptum.

"The goalposts have literally just moved for marathon running and where you benchmark yourself as being world class," said BBC pundit Paula Radcliffe, who held the women's marathon record of 2:15:25 from 2003 to 2019.

"I did think that mark could be beaten but not today.

"It is a lesson to everybody out there. We say don't go out too fast and they went out smartly and paced it really well. Smart racing brought it to the line."

The two-hour barrier has long been a goal of increasing numbers of elite marathon runners, not least Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge.

In October 2019, Kipchoge famously broke that barrier as he timed 1:59:40 on the streets of Vienna.

But the time was not ratified as a world record because he ran with specialised shoes, standard competition rules for pacing and fluids were not followed, and it was not an open event.

Kenyan Paul Tergat's time of 2:04.55 in the 2003 Berlin Marathon was the first ratified world record over the 26.2-mile (42.2-km)distance.

Ethiopian Haile Gebrselassie twice bettered that mark, both times in Berlin, dipping under 2:04.00.

The record then swung back into Kenyan hands, first with Patrick Makau and then Wilson Kipsang and Dennis Kimetto setting new marks.

In the women's race, reigning Olympic and world silver medallist Assefa was locked in a three-way tussle with Kenyan pair Hellen Obiri and Joyciline Jepkosgei, but surged away in the closing stages to cross the line in a time of 2:15:41.

That time beat by nine seconds the Ethiopian's previous best, set on the same course last year.

Kenya's Sabastian Sawe celebrates winning the men's elite race with a new world record time of 01:59:30 at the London Marathon on Sunday. REUTERS

## Parvesh-ridden Enrica wins main event

**DELHI RESULTS**

SM Abbas-trained Enrica, ridden by Parvesh, won the DRC Managing Committee Juvenile Sprinters Cup, the feature event of the races on Sunday.
**1. Summer Majesty Plate - 1000M:** Dashing Harry (Jai Parkash) 1; Gamati (Arjun) 2; Shera (Varun) 3; Miss Boost (S Mosin) 4; WB: Shd, hd, 1 1/4L; T: 1:00.97; TB: Ajay Sharma; Fav: Dashing Harry.
**2. Sunlight Sprint Plate - (Div I) 1000M:** Time To Win (Lave Kumar) 1; Big Daddy (Vishal) 2; She's A Beauty (Shivam) 3; Missey Boy (Sameer Qureshi) 4; WB: Nk, 1 1/4, 1/2L; T: 59.11; TB:Zulfiqar Khan; Fav: Missey Boy.
**3. Sunlight Sprint Plate - (Div II) 1000M:** Lady Hi Tman (Varun) 1; First Class (Dhanu Singh) 2; Divit (Jai Prakash) 3; Lemon Pie (Vishal) 4; WB: 1, 1/2, 1 1/4L; T: 59.98; TB: K Ali Khan; Fav: First Class.
**4. Sunny sky Plate - 1600M:** Black Rainstorm (Lave Kumar) 1; Bigg Tymer (R Pravesh) 2; Ashwa Gajraj (K Nazil) 3; Dubai Falcon (Varun) 4; WB: 4 1/4, 2 3/4, hd. T: 1:38.72 TB: SM Abbas; Fav: Ashwa Gajraj.
**5. DRC Managing Committee Juvenile Sprinters Cup - 1200M:** Enrica (R Parvesh) 1; Reback (K Sunny Kumar) 2; Stavya (Varun) 3; Scarlett Tempest (K Narender) 4; WB: 1 3/4, 2, 16 1/2L T: 1:13.77. TB: SM Abbas Fav: Enrica.
**6. Sun Star Plate - 1200M:** Viggen (Varun) 1; Insta Millionaire (Vishal) 2; Cletus (MB Qureshi) 3; Thanks Again (Arun) 4; WB: T: 1:12.53. TB: K Ali Khan; Fav:Insta Millionaire.
**Bengaluru dividends**
**I race:** Rs 13w; 10, 14, 11p; Shp: Rs 43; Thp: Rs 29; Fc: Rs 93; Q: Rs 52; Tri:Rs 166 & 42; Exp:Rs 364 & 153.
**II race:** Rs 49w; 13, 10, 10p; Shp: Rs 43; Thp: Rs 36; Fc: Rs 704; Q: Rs 422; Tri: Rs 2631 & 1503; Exp: Rs 3614 & 1859.
**III race:** Rs 54w; 15, 10, 13p; Shp: Rs 28; Thp: Rs 38; Fc: Rs 177; Q: Rs 65; Tri: Rs 289 & 155; Exp: Rs 539 & 322.
**IV race:** Rs 45w; 16, 29, 12p; Shp: Rs 132; Thp: Rs 45; Fc: Rs 1417; Q: Rs 823; Tri: Rs 4306 & 430; Exp: Rs C/O 42,657.
**V race:** Rs 12w; 10, 23p; Shp: Rs 39; Thp: Rs 25; Fc: Rs 80; Q: Rs 42; Tri: Rs 105 & 60; Exp: Rs 168 & 55.
**VI race:** Rs 36w; 12, 17, 17p; Shp: Rs 43; Thp: Rs 53; Fc: Rs 93; Q: Rs 46; Tri: Rs 446 & 186; Exp: Rs 943 & 272.
**Jackpot:** 25,250.
**Runner-up:** 1951.
**Mini Jackpot:** 1418.
**Treble:** 257.

# Eze fires in Arsenal's win over Newcastle to put Gunners back on top of the table

LONDON, AFP

Eberechi Eze fired Arsenal back to the top of the Premier League on Saturday as relegation-threatened Tottenham won for the first time in 2026 to give themselves renewed hope.

The Gunners were nine points clear of Manchester City just two weeks ago before losing their way, allowing Pep Guardiola's men to overtake them.

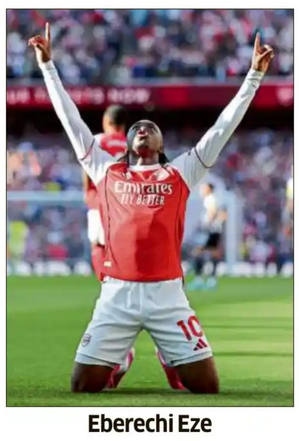
Saturday's home game against Newcastle was a must-win for Arsenal, with City involved in an FA Cup semi-final against Southampton at Wembley, which they won to stay on track for a domestic treble.

Before the Gunners kicked off on Saturday, the two teams were locked on 70 points each, with an identical goal difference. City topped the table on goals scored.

Eze took the pressure off with an early goal, arrowing home from outside the box after being teed up by Kai Havertz and the game finished 1-0.

Arsenal are desperate to shed their reputation as perpetual runners-up as they chase their first Premier League title since 2004.

But they are up against a City juggernaut aiming for a seventh league title in nine seasons.


Eberechi Eze

### Chelsea set up City date

Enzo Fernandez fired Chelsea into the FA Cup final against Manchester City as the Argentine sealed a 1-0 win against Leeds in the Blues' first match after Liam Rosenior's sacking, reports AFP from London.

Fernandez's first-half header in Sunday's semifinal at Wembley was an ironic twist after another farcical chapter in Chelsea's turbulent recent history.

The midfielder emerged as a divisive figure towards the end of Rosenior's brief reign after he was dropped for two games.

# India keep quarters hope alive

HORSENS (DENMARK), PTI

The young Indian women's team received a massive morale boost with a commanding 4-1 victory over European Championships bronze medallist Ukraine in their second Group A clash here, bouncing back strongly after a narrow 2-3 loss to hosts Denmark in the opener.

The youngsters hit the court with intent on Saturday, with Unnati Hooda setting the tone early as India produced a spirited all-round performance to register its first win of the campaign in emphatic fashion.

Unnati Hooda. FILE PHOTO

India opted to rest former world champion PV Sindhu in singles, handing 2026 Thailand Masters champion Devika Sihag a chance in the third singles, and the youngster delivered in style.

Unnati Hooda set the ball rolling with a thrilling 21-19, 22-20 win over Polina Buhrova.

**Result: (Uber Cup):** India bt Ukraine 4-1 (Unnati Hooda bt Polina Buhrova 21-19, 22-20; Tanvi Sharma bt Yevheniia Kantemyr 21-12, 17-21, 21-10; Devika Sihag bt Mariia Stoliarenko 23-21, 21-13; Kavipriya Selvam/ Simran Singhi lt to Buhrova/ Kantemyr 11-21, 17-21; Tanisha Crasto/ Sindhu bt Sofiia Lavrova/ Stoliarenko 21-18, 21-15).

## Young Blues Elite crowned champions of KSFA Women's A Division League

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Young Blues Elite FC's scored a thumping 5-0 win over TFF in their last league game before lifting the KSFA Women's A Division League Championships title at the Bangalore Football Stadium on Sunday.

**Results:** Young Blues Elite FC: 5 (Nilavoli Sethurayar 4th, Shravy Manoj 6th, 31st, Lakshita Vinay Nair 34th, Dhanusree Arun Chanayil 70th) bt TFF: 0; Kemp Juniors FC: 2 (Pragya Kumari Thakur 18th, Diya Krishnamurthy 58th) bt SRC: 0; Reds United FC: 3 (Anisha Vivek Itengar 16th, Charvi A 67th, 68th) bt Pass FC Sparks: 0.
**Special awards: Best Goalkeeper:** Ketaki Parag Gulhane (YBEFC). **Best Defender:** Judith Sonali Jhon (Parikrma FC). **Best Mid-fielder:** Nilavoli Sethurayar (YBEFC). **Top Scorer:** Arti Munda (Parikrma FC). **Top-3 scorers:** Arti Munda (9 goals, Parikrma FC), Sonam Dutta (7 goals, Parikrma FC), Jhanavi Reddy (6 goals, Kemp FC).

Winners Young Blues Elite FC pose with their spoils.

IPL 2026

10 TEAMS 13 VENUES 58 DAYS 74 MATCHES

"If I have to be critical, finishing an innings has been a problem. We need to do better in that. But, very happy to get a win like that in this part of India.

**SHUBMAN GILL, GT SKIPPER**

# Rabada leads Titans rout of CSK

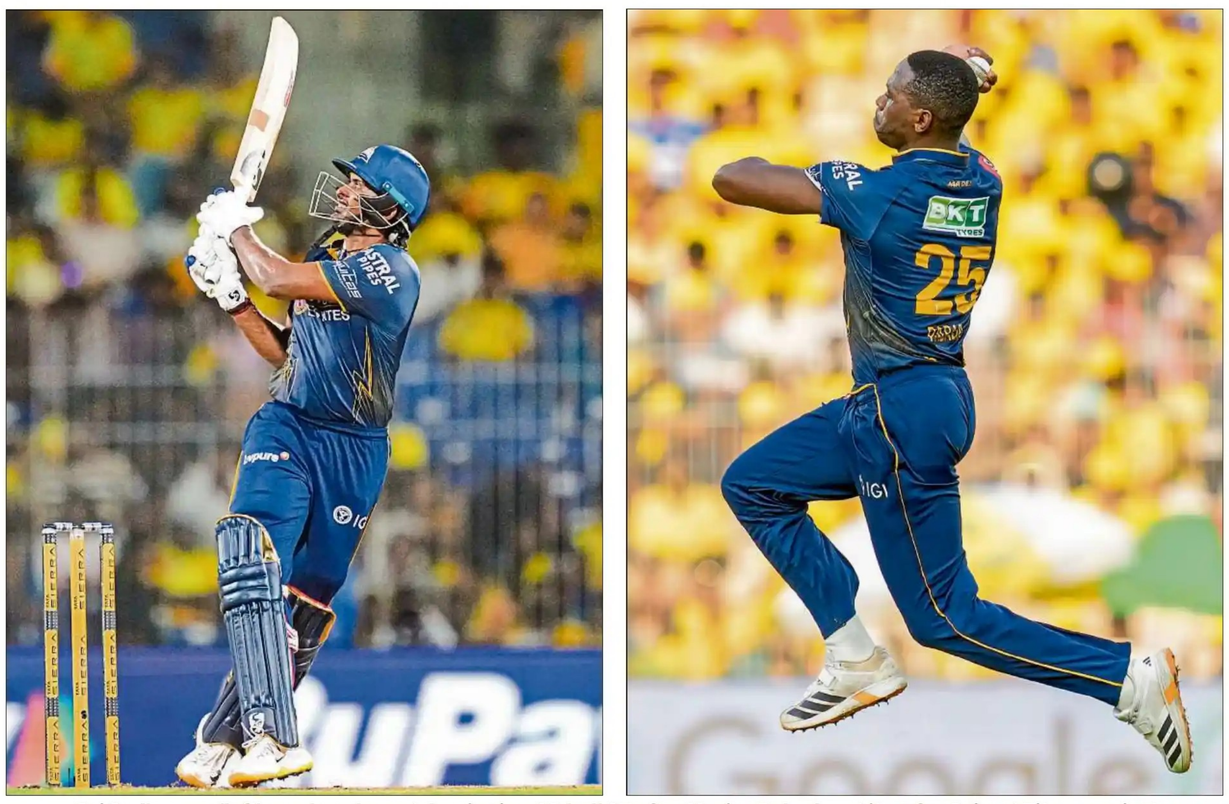
## Sudharsan strikes classy 87 as Gill's men bounce back in style

CHENNAI, PTI

Bowlers calling the shots in a format dominated by big hitters is a rarity, but that script played out at Chepauk on Sunday as Gujarat Titans exploited a bounce-friendly surface to stifle Chennai Super Kings before chasing down the target through a Sai Sudharsan masterclass to win the IPL contest by eight wickets.

If the first half belonged to the bowlers, the chase was all about calculated aggression as Sudharsan produced a shining tutorial in adapting to conditions, smashing 87 off 46 balls to anchor Titans' comfortable pursuit of 159.

The win moved Titans to fifth position from seventh with eight points.





Sai Sudharsan (left) produced a match-winning 46-ball 87 after Kagiso Rabada set it up for Gujarat Titans against Chennai Super Kings in Chennai on Sunday. PTI

On a pitch that had earlier demanded caution, Sudharsan showed how to blend restraint with intent, picking the right deliveries to attack while respecting the bounce on offer.

He found an able partner in skipper Shubman Gill, who made a brisk 33 off 23 balls before falling to spinner Noor Ahmad.

The Titans openers laid a solid foundation with a 58-run stand, effectively taking the game away from CSK in the Powerplay itself. Gill looked fluent, mixing elegance with aggression, but his dismissal did little to slow the visitors.

Sudharsan, who had struck a century in the previous game against RCB, carried his sublime form forward, unleashing a range of strokes, particularly against pace to keep the scoreboard ticking at a healthy rate.

The left-hander's seven sixes underlined his dominance on a surface where CSK's batters had struggled earlier in the day.

Jos Buttler played the perfect supporting role, remaining unbeaten on 39 off 30 balls as Titans reached 154 for 1, finishing the chase with 20 balls to spare.

Ahmad and Akeal Hosein took a wicket apiece while the rest struggled to contain the flow of runs as the Titans batters showed far better awareness of the conditions.

Earlier, on a pitch that offered sharp carry, stroke-making demanded discretion and adaptability.

Instead, CSK's batters often opted for high-risk shots without fully assessing conditions, and paid the price with a flurry of miscued dismissals, managing 158/7.

CSK never quite found rhythm but skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's maiden half-century (74 not out) of the current IPL season lent a semblance of respectability.

**SCORE BOARD**

**CHENNAI SUPER KINGS:** Sanju Samson c Buttler b Rabada 11, Ruturaj Gaikwad (not out) 74, Urvil Patel c Holder b Rabada 4, Sarfaraz Khan c Buttler b Siraj 0, Dewald Brevis c Gill b Suthar 2, Shivam Dube b Arshad 22, Kartik Sharma c Holder b Rabada 15, Jamie Overton c Shahrukh b Arshad 18, Akeal Hosein (not out) 0. Extras (LB-2 W-10) 12. **TOTAL (For 7 wkts, 20 overs) 158.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-21, 2-25, 3-26, 4-37, 5-96, 6-122, 7-143.

**Bowling:** Mohammed Siraj 4-0-23-1, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-25-3, Manav Suthar 3-0-22-1, Jason Holder 4-0-22-0, Arshad Khan 4-0-43-2, Rashid Khan 1-0-21-0.

**GUJARAT TITANS:** Sai Sudharsan c Brevis b Hosein 87, Shubman Gill st Samson b Noor 33, Jos Buttler (not out) 39, Washington Sundar (not out) 1. Extras (W-2) 2. **TOTAL (For 2 wkts, 16.4 overs) 162.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-58, 2-155.

**Bowling:** Akeal Hosein 3.4-0-46-1, Anshul Kamboj 3-0-16-0, Jamie Overton 2-0-28-0, Gurjapneet Singh 3-0-36-0, Noor Ahmad 4-0-29-1, Shivam Dube 1-0-7-0.

**Result:** GT won by 8 wickets.

**PoM:** Kagiso Rabada.

# Rock solid Challengers take on rattled Capitals

## Patidar's men eye another win to consolidate position among top two

NEW DELHI, PTI

**LIVE 7:30 PM**

Hurting from a staggering defeat despite posting 264, Delhi Capitals have little time to recover emotionally as they face another formidable side in defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru in IPL here on Monday.

The six-wicket loss to Punjab Kings, a game in which their bowlers were dismantled in a record chase, has left DC shaken.

Placed sixth on the table, they now find themselves in a tightening playoff race where another defeat could seriously dent their chances.

Delhi's campaign so far has been defined by splendid batting but inconsistent execution with the ball.

Their top order, led by KL Rahul, has repeatedly provided blistering starts, while the likes of Nitish Rana and David Miller have ensured momentum is maintained through the middle overs.

However, the inability to defend even imposing totals is a concern after a moderate success while chasing totals..

The death bowling, in particular, has looked vulnerable under pressure.

That puts added responsibility on their bowling unit.

Seamer Aaquib Nabi, wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav and skipper Axar Patel himself will need to step up significantly, especially in crunch situations, if Delhi are to plug the glaring gaps that have cost them dearly in recent games.

In contrast, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, placed a comfortable second in points table, have shown greater balance across departments.

Led by charismatic Virat Kohli their batting unit has revolved around strong top-order contributions, and the form of Devdutt Padikkal only adds further depth and stability, making them an even more formidable batting side.

The middle order, too, has played more defined roles in finishing games.

But RCB's threat is not limited to their batting firepower alone. Their bowlers have shown the ability to rein in opposition sides in crucial phases, particularly at the death: a quality that could prove decisive against a free-scoring Delhi line-up.

In their previous outing, RCB's bowling unit demonstrated impressive composure under pressure.

Despite Gujarat being well-placed for a massive total, the trio of Suyash Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Josh Hazlewood executed their plans to perfection in the closing overs, using variations and disciplined lines to deny acceleration, underlined RCB's growing reputation as a side capable of closing out innings.

Led by charismatic Virat Kohli, Royal Challengers Bengaluru's batting unit will once again hope for a strong top-order show when they take on Delhi Capitals at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Monday. AFP

# Narine aces Super Over as KKR win

LUCKNOW, PTI

After Lucknow Super Giants walked with them toe-to-toe in regulation time, Kolkata Knight Riders found a familiar saviour in Sunil Narine to register a tight Super Over victory in their IPL match here on Sunday.

Both Super Giants and Knight Riders ended up at 155 when a total of 40 overs were bowled, but Narine made all the difference in the Super Over.

Conjuring his years' of experience, the spinner dismissed Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram to limit LSG to 1 for two, which was also the lowest score in a Super Over.

The Kolkatans did not fumble and notched up the required two runs with Rinku Singh, who also had wonderful day on the field taking four catches, fittingly fetching the winning runs.

Rinku Singh

It was Rinku's well-paced 83 not out off 51 balls that worked as the catalyst for KKR total of 155 for seven earlier.

Once the Super Giants restricted KKR to that modest total, courtesy Mohsin Khan's five-for, they had an excellent chance to register a rare home victory.

But the hosts slipped against a set of spot-on Kolkata bowlers on a slow black soil pitch.

**SCORE BOARD**

**KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS:** Ajinkya Rahane c Markram b Mohsin 10, Tim Seifert c Choudhary b Mohsin 0, Angkrish Raghuvanshi obstructing the field 9, Cameron Green c Pant b Mohsin 34, Rovman Powell c Pant b Mohsin 1, Rinku Singh (not out) 83, Anukul Roy c Badoni b Mohsin 0, Ramandeep Singh c Marsh b Linde 6, Sunil Narine (not out) 4. Extras (LB-1, W-7) 8. **TOTAL (for 7 wkts, 20 overs) 155.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-3, 2-16, 3-27, 4-31, 5-73, 6-73, 7-93.

**Bowling:** Mohammed Shami 4-0-34-0, Mohsin Khan 4-1-23-5, Prince Yadav 4-0-24-0, Digvesh Rathi 4-0-46-0, George Linde 2-0-18-1, Aiden Markram 2-0-9-0.

**LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS:** Aiden Markram c Singh b Green 31, Mitchell Marsh c Powell b Arora 2, Rishabh Pant c Seifert b Narine 42, Nicholas Pooran c Narine b Varun 9, Ayush Badoni c Roy b Varun 24, Mukul Choudhary c Singh b Roy 1, Himmat Singh c Singh b Kartik 19, George Linde c Singh b Arora 8, Mohammed Shami (not out) 11, Prince Yadav (not out) 1. Extras (B-2, LB-1, NB-2, W-3) 8. **TOTAL (for 8 wkts, 20 overs) 155.**

**Fall of wickets:** 1-8, 2-65, 3-78, 4-89, 5-93, 6-120, 7-129, 8-148.

**Bowling:** Anukul Roy 2-0-19-1, Vaibhav Arora 4-0-24-2, Cameron Green 2-0-12-1, Sunil Narine 4-0-23-1, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-33-2, Kartik Tyagi 4-0-41-1.

**Super Over:** LSG: 1 (W, 1, W) It to KKR: 4 (4).

**Result:** Match tied (KKR won the Super Over).

**PoM:** Rinku Singh.

**POINTS TABLE**

| Team | Played | Won | Lost | NR | Pts | NRR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Punjab Kings | 7 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 1.333 |
| Royal Challengers | 7 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 10 | 1.101 |
| Sunrisers Hyderabad | 8 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 0.815 |
| Rajasthan Royals | 8 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 0.602 |
| Gujarat Titans | 8 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 8 | -0.475 |
| Chennai Super Kings | 8 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 6 | -0.121 |
| Delhi Capitals | 7 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 6 | -0.184 |
| Kolkata Knight Riders | 8 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 5 | -0.751 |
| Mumbai Indians | 7 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 4 | -0.736 |
| Lucknow Super Giants | 8 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 4 | -1.106 |

## Dhoni's return delayed further

**CHENNAI, PTI:** Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming **(in pic)** on Sunday said MS Dhoni's return to the ongoing IPL will be further delayed as the talisman suffered a fresh calf injury during a warm-up game.

CSK have played eight matches this season without their former captain, and Fleming said initially Dhoni was expected to recover within a couple of weeks, but the calf injury aggravation has mandated a more cautious rehabilitation process.

"Yeah, he's pretty keen. The calf is a tough one though. If he takes off and rips the calf again, then he will be gone," said Fleming in the post-match press meet.

# Kothari enters last-16 despite shock defeat to Goodwill

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Veteran cueist Martin Goodwill of England scored a shock win over reigning champion Sourav Kothari in the final Group 'A' league match of the IBSF World Billiards Championship in Carlow, Ireland on Sunday. Despite the defeat, Kothari made the pre-quarterfinals.

**Results (Indians unless mentioned): Group A:** Martin Goodwill (Eng): 276 (62, 66) bt Sourav Kothari: 275 (81, 57); Kothari: 825 (515, 212, 66) bt Akhilesh Mohan (Fra): 40. **Group B:** Pankaj Advani: 785 (162, 88, 389, 56, 60) bt Baek Minhu (Kor): 161 (51); Advani: 902 (85, 55, 60, 74, 100, 131, 53, 83, 93, 54, 50) bt Mark Hill (Eng): 78. **Group C:** Dhruv Sitwala: 621 (203, 90, 133) bt Aonghus McAnally (Ire): 169; Alok Kumar: 522 (69, 54) bt Carl-Walter Steiner (Aut): 184. **Group D:** Rafath Habib: 399 (62) bt Ciaran Doyle (Ire): 95; David Causier (Eng): 1049 (542, 101, 130, 131) bt Subrat Das: 149. **Group E:** Rupesh Shah: 518 (71, 85, 96) bt Peter Tankard (Aus): 211; Robert Hall (Eng) 329 (53, 57, 59, 82) bt Rishabh Thakkar: 250 (77). **Group F:** Shrikrishna S: 552 (137, 84) bt Joe Doheny (Ire): 202; Peter Sheehan (Eng): 833 (152, 223, 291, 62) bt Jagadesh Bhuvaneswaran: 171 (61). **Group G:** Dhvaj Haria: 790 (92, 107, 103, 370) bt Aidan Murray (Ire): 109; Haria 830 (225, 51, 57, 96, 120, 175) bt Srinu Katipogu: 98; Mike Russell (Eng) 440 (121, 52, 128) bt Katipogu 189 (60).

# India win two more medals to finish on top

**CAIRO, PTI:** Hemant Burman won silver in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions and the pair of Zuhair Khan and Addya Katyal won bronze in the trap mixed team event as India completed the ISSF Junior Shooting World Cup on top of the table with a total of 16 medals, including five gold, six silver and five bronze medals.

In the first finals of the day, Burman earned silver after shooting 351.7 across the three positions in the 50m 3Positions event.

The 18-year-old had qualified for the final in seventh place with a score of 578-24x and was joined by Vedant Nitin Waghmare and Rohit Kanyan in the finals, who shot 581 and 580 respectively. Rohit finished in sixth place in the final with a score of 311.9, and Vedant finished seventh with a score of 300.5.

Oleg Noskov of Kazakhstan, with a new world junior record score of 355.6, won the gold medal and Nikita Solokov of Uzbekistan won bronze with a score of 341.2.

In the final event, the pair of Zuhair and Addya secured the bronze medal with a final score of 19 after qualifying for the medal rounds.

## Sabalenka sails into last 16

**MADRID, AFP:** Iga Swiatek was forced to retire in the third round of the Madrid Open on Saturday due to a viral illness, while reigning champion Aryna Sabalenka **(in pic)** extended her winning run to 14 matches.

A champion in the Spanish capital in 2024, Swiatek rebounded from a one-set deficit against American 31st seed Ann Li to level the contest but put an end to proceedings while down 0-3 in the decider.

Swiatek asked for the doctor after getting broken early in the third set and got her vitals checked.

When her opponent held for a 3-0 lead, the fourth seed realised she was unable to continue.

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